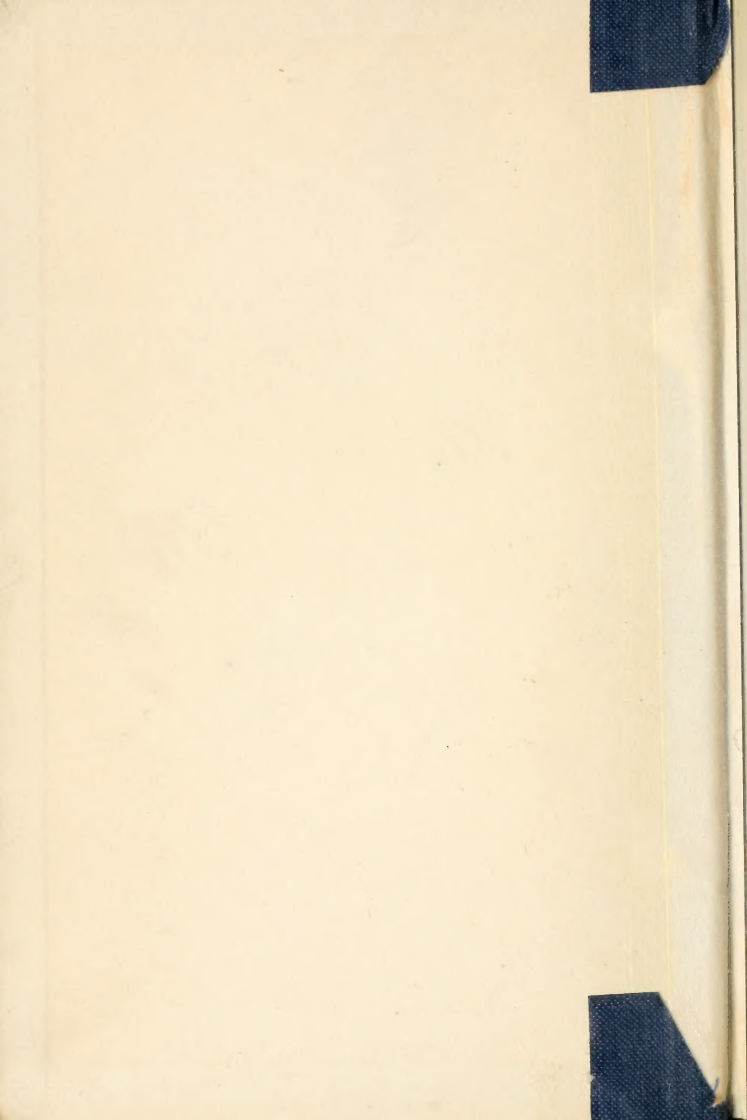
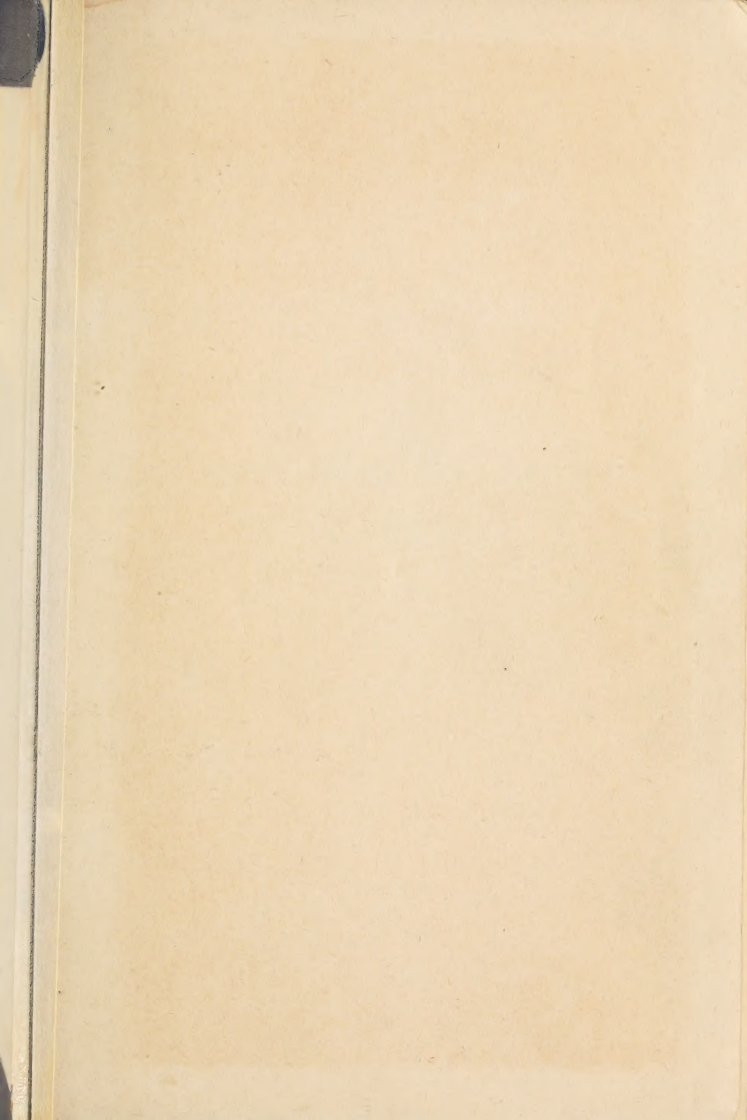


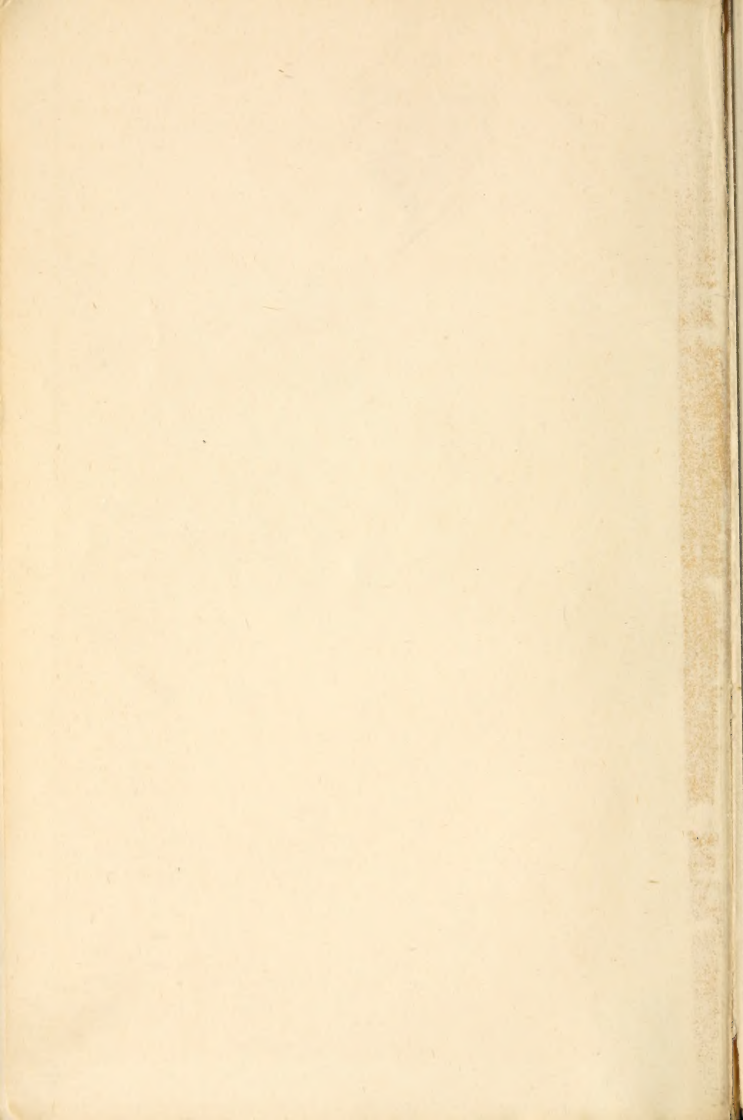
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THE ORIGINAL ELEMENT
IN PLAUTUS

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THE ORIGINAL ELEMENT
IN PLAUTUS

BY

K. M. WESTAWAY, M.A.

*Catherine
Westaway*

*152798
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Quasi poeta, tabulas quom cepit sibi,
quaerit quod nusquam gentiumst, reperit tamen,
facit illud ueri simile quod mendacium est,
nunc ego poeta fiam.

Pseudolus, 401-404.

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INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

"I wish," said the teacher to the student, "that you were working at an artist, and not at a hack like Plautus."

The student, puzzled and discouraged, consulted other authorities as to the precise meaning of "hack," and found that it meant "a literary drudge, who is much overworked, and therefore a person habitually tired."

Now, whatever other failings may be ascribed to Plautus, he certainly never shows signs of being tired; and although he is often casually set down as being nothing better than a mechanical translator from Greek into Latin, yet a perusal of his plays suggests that many of them are the work neither of a hack nor of a single artist, but of several artists, of whom Plautus was indubitably one.

From the vague generalities which are found in treatises on Latin literature, it would seem that the plays of Plautus "are in the main versions or imitations of originals of the New Comedy." Therefore, in proportion to the value which we set upon both the New Comedy and Plautus, it is profitable to examine how the Roman poet treated the material at his command, and to what extent, if at all, he contributed to his work something original, something of his own personality.

In translating Greek plays into Latin, two courses were open to him. He might have remodelled his play in every detail, changing the scenes, names, and general customs, and adapting them to his own age and country. Such a work would approximate to the *fabula togata*, the national Roman comedy. It was a type not common at Rome, by reason of the strict laws which forbade the exhibition of current politics or personalities on the stage. Naevius tried it, and paid the penalty. On the other hand, Plautus might with the Greek plot have retained the Greek customs, names, and places, and produced what were called *fabulae palliatae*. This is approximately what he did, and the present problem is to ascertain the value of the result.

Chief among the difficulties in this enquiry is our ignorance of the New Comedy. The four longest fragments of Menander, precious though they are in the circumstances, are but a very small fraction of the large literature which they represent. They certainly read as if they had some kinship with Plautus, though much more with the less boisterous Terence, but we have no proof that they are typical of all that is lost. Beyond these, the extant remains of the New Comedy are the merest scraps, chosen by moralists for a special purpose, and the possibility, always present, that from the sands of Egypt or some other hiding-place of literary treasure, there will come to light some direct original of a Plautine comedy, makes us hesitate to accept for a certainty even a single suggestion concerning Plautus' originality. Our knowledge of his sources is derived from the prologues, and is limited to the following list:

The *Rudens* from the *πήρα* of Diphilus.

The *Casina* from the *κληρούμενοι* of Diphilus.

The *Mostellaria* from the *φάσμα* of Diphilus.

The *Mercator* from the *ἔμπορος* of Philemon.

The *Bacchides* from the *δὺς ἐξαπατῶν* of Menander.

The *Asinaria* from the *ὀναγός* of Demophilus.

The *Miles Gloriosus* partly from the *ἀλαζών* of an unknown author.

The *Poenulus* partly from the *Καρχηδόνιος* of an unknown author.

This leaves twelve plays of which we are quite unable to trace the originals.

We are further handicapped by our ignorance of Plautus' preparation for dramatic work, and of the conditions under which he carried it out. This makes it all the more important to consider him (perhaps more than is usually done) in conjunction with the historical events in which he moved. We know from A. Gellius that he was born of poor parents at Sarsina in Umbria about 254 B.C.; that he went to Rome, and worked as a stage-carpenter, or possibly as an actor; that he made some money, and lost it later through speculations in foreign trade; that he then hired himself to a miller, and in his leisure time wrote plays and sold them; and that he died in 184. Such a life of hard work, poverty, and misfortune, could hardly have been expected to yield a literature with sufficient vitality to survive for more than two thousand years. As was the case with Shakespeare, however, his work in connection with the theatre must have given him an insight into the technicalities of play-producing, and have enabled him to make any necessary modifications of Greek plays for adaptation to the requirements of the Roman stage. Of his education we know nothing, though it seems safe to assume that he knew Greek, while the fifth

act of the *Poenulus* suggests that he had at least a working knowledge of Carthaginian. In later ages a hundred and thirty plays passed under his name. Varro thought there were only twenty-one certainly authentic plays, and it has been suggested that the remainder were other people's works which he merely touched up. Yet it is difficult to see what plays these can have been. He had no predecessors beyond Andronicus and Naevius, and there is no evidence that their plays underwent revision at his hands. In any case he seems to have been a most prolific writer, and the twenty plays now extant do not by any means form the total of his output.

It is essential to remember that he stands very early in the line of Latin writers. In his own country he had singularly little literary tradition behind him. To a degree which we find it hard to reconstruct in imagination, he had to be tentative, ingenious, resourceful, and self-dependent. He is actually the most ancient of extant Latin authors, and as he is in this way, to us, isolated from the few other writers of his age, we cannot fathom any of the motives, other than mercenary, which turned his activity in the direction of play-writing, nor can we estimate the ideals at which he aimed. This at least is certain, that he did not aspire to provide twentieth-century scholars with specimens of pure Greek or pure Roman comedy. He recognised an immediate requirement of his age, and, unaware that Quintilian would have reason to lament his countrymen's lack of aptitude for comedy¹, he met this need by a literature which retained unbroken popularity on the stage till the time of the actor Roscius a hundred years later. It is unlikely that he anticipated or even

¹ *in comœdia maxime claudicamus*, Quintilian.

desired literary immortality. Of all forms of literature, comedy is perhaps the least likely to win permanent appreciation. We shall try to trace his growing recognition of this fact as seen in his treatment of the bygone Greek drama; and probably if he ever estimated the prospective life of his own works, he took this lesson to heart. Certainly he never supposed that anyone would enquire into his original element, and, apart from his untiring vivacity and exuberant realism, his vivid imagination and power of expression, he has, in collusion with the sands of Egypt mentioned above, wrapped his originality in an impenetrable veil. Suggestions on the subject can be nothing more than a questionable hypothesis, and by our proposed dissection of his genius we are treating unnaturally one of the most spontaneous writers of any age.

There are, as well, minor difficulties in this problem. It is useless to try to separate, in a mechanical way, "the Greek" from "the Roman" in these plays. Such a process is like a double-edged sword, and cuts two ways. In the first place, Plautus must have translated many Greek technical terms, particularly in legal and judicial matters, and to a smaller extent, in the case of military and certain social formulae, by corresponding Roman technical terms. Thus *praetor* is presumably equivalent to *ἄρχων*, *forum* to *ἀγορά*, and so on; and although these words have a Roman colour, we cannot for that reason count them as an "original element" in Plautus. It is impossible to know here where to draw the line. On the other hand, in Plautus' day there must have been a certain amount of Greek assimilated into Latin language and thought. This will be discussed in detail later in the enquiry, but again it is impossible to draw

a definite line between the two elements. The amount of incorporated Greek must, for historical reasons, have been small compared with what it was in later ages; but that it was already well-established and steadily increasing is suggested by the vigorous opposition offered to it in all its branches by Cato, and still more by the fact that in his later days that sturdy old Roman was forced in some degree to acknowledge its worth and to seek personal advantage from it.

Our enquiry will be divided into three parts. First we shall consider the peculiarities of some individual plays which seem to represent different periods of Plautus' maturing art. Secondly, regarding the plays as a whole, and remembering the Greek origin which is assumed as the background of them all, we shall see to what extent Plautus has introduced into them genuine elements of contemporary Roman life and thought, and how far he has eliminated Grecisms which would strike his audience as being quaint or foreign. Lastly, after this examination of facts derived exclusively from the plays themselves, we shall be in a position to offer some tentative suggestions concerning Plautus' natural literary endowment and the development which it underwent during his long career.

Plautus is difficult to illustrate by parallel quotations, and a word is necessary concerning the value of illustrations derived from other Latin authors. A parallel from Cato, for long the staunch opponent of everything Greek, may reasonably be supposed to mark a Plautine feature as Roman: but later authors were probably influenced by Greek ideas far more than Plautus was, and a quotation from their writings does not at all necessarily contribute

a Roman rather than a Greek notion. Nevertheless, these illustrations, if chosen with discretion, may possess a considerable value, as pointing, at the very lowest estimate, to Roman thought at a somewhat later period.

[In the following pages, references to the text of Plautus are in accordance with the Oxford text of Professor Lindsay, and those to Menander follow the Teubner edition of Koerte (1910).]

CHAPTER I

REMARKS ON INDIVIDUAL PLAYS

1. THE *MERCATOR*: THE PROBLEM OF LITERAL TRANSLATION

The fact of translation should not, in itself, detract from Plautus' originality as it would from that of a modern writer. Practically all Roman literature, down to his day, was translated Greek. The Romans had simply not reached the stage of composing a literature of their own. One of the chief reasons for this was that so far they had been too busy with other things; but it must also have been due to some inherent quality of the Italian genius, for, in modern times, Madame de Staël, raising the same point about the Italians who were her contemporaries, asserted that they "are afraid of new ideas, rather because they are indolent than from literary servility." Of this latter fault we may declare our author guiltless. He only followed Livius Andronicus and Naevius when he set about his enterprise of translating Greek comedies into Latin.

He was entirely without the many aids to Greek translation which beset the modern novice. It was not an age of scholarship, and knowledge of a foreign tongue was almost certain to be practical and not literary. The only tribunal

before which Plautus could bring his work was the general public, and that was a body which could only pronounce approval or disapproval; it could not apply analytical and intelligent criticism. It has been said that a whole nation constitutes the judges of dramatic literature; but where the nation is too young to be a competent judge, it is a serious drawback to the authors of that literature. Plautus learnt his lesson in a difficult school, where his faults were made clear enough by his audience, but remedies had to be devised by his own unaided wit.

Since in the light of our own generation we have not yet decided what good translation really is, it is hardly surprising that Plautus' conception of it was somewhat inadequate, at any rate at the beginning of his career. Probably his best working standard, and that at which he eventually, if unconsciously, arrived, lay in the words of Newman, the translator of Homer, that a translation "shall affect our countrymen as the original may be conceived to have affected its natural hearers." At first, however, he did not fully grasp the meaning of this condition. He expected that the Roman theatre would be affected by his *Mercator* just as Philemon's was by the "Ἐμπορος. This was a mistake. Philemon's audience felt that it was listening to a comedy. Plautus' audience, had it been capable of putting its dissatisfaction into words, would have said that it was listening to a piece of translation.

Of all Plautus' plays, the *Mercator*, as we shall see later in detail, has been least re-dressed in Roman colours. Besides containing as many references to Greek legend and mythology as do any of the other plays, it goes rather too far in other directions, for instance in the long list of Greek

cities enumerated by *Charinus* (l. 646 *seq.*) and in the details of his imaginary tour through the Greek isles (l. 937 *seq.*), which would have been better eliminated. There is nothing familiar and Roman to counterbalance the effect of this. Moreover, had Plautus been an experienced playwright, he would have welcomed the opportunity of cutting down the excessively long passage in Act I. Sc. ii., in which *Acanthio* absurdly delays giving his news to his master. So dull is this (merely by reason of its length) that one could well believe that the line (160) about the "slumbering audience" was improvised one day by an observant actor, and incorporated later into the text.

The *Mercator* is undoubtedly the least satisfactory of Plautus' plays, because the author had not realised that the old magic of Greek comedy was composed largely of the indefinable interplay of sympathies between living actors and living spectators; that all this necessarily died by the act of translation, and became to a foreign audience only tiresome and dull. The new Roman play had to have a colour and an intensity of its own, which could be imparted only by the living personal touch of the new poet. All the topical allusions and little appealing Romanisms, with which he adorned his later plays, are absent from the *Mercator*. Later, when he had more grip over the feelings of his audience, he saw truly that a certain slight Greek flavour about his work was essential to success, for it requires a more highly trained intelligence to appreciate the subtleties of a drama concerned with one's own sphere of life, than it does to enjoy the broader effects of something a little more remote and strange; and to the former condition the Roman of that age was not yet educated. Plautus learnt, too, that a good

translation of a play of the New Comedy must be not too exclusively *palliata*, for by not clinging too closely to a literal rendering of the plays he selected, he would reproduce more nearly the spirit, which is the life.

But probably the *Cistellaria* and some other plays were written before he had learnt, in any measure, the lessons of the *Mercator*.

2. THE *POENULUS* AND THE *MILES GLORIOSUS*: *CONTAMINATIO*

Plautus, like many other playwrights, approached his work as the man in the street. He had no idea of the difficulties to be overcome, nor, we may add, of the glory to be obtained by overcoming them. Thus, after he had translated a certain number of comedies with some success, and was beginning to feel some assurance in his workmanship, it seemed the easiest thing in the world to put together two parts of different plays, and make a new and complete drama, and he was inclined to approach this form of jig-saw puzzle rather in the spirit of a child who mechanically puts the pieces together, than in that of an artist who considers the structure as a whole. The technical term for welding parts of different plays into a single whole is, in Latin, *contaminatio*. It obviously involves a certain amount of enterprise, indeed of originality. Naevius had already availed himself of the method and it is illuminating to see in what measure Plautus profited by it.

As a first example we will consider the *Poenulus*. It is a dull play. Its title suggests that it was written after the end of the second Punic war, when Roman animosity towards

Carthage had died down sufficiently to allow a humorous aspect to their relations, but while the interest in Carthage was still prominent in the public mind. This theory is supported by l. 524,

re populi placida...interfectis hostibus,

which is probably a topical allusion because it is so pointless in the context. The *Hanno* who is responsible for the name of the piece bears the same name as the great general who took part in the war. We know of several Carthaginians named *Hanno*, and there were probably many more whom we do not know; Macaulay in his poem of Virginia has a *Hanno*, the keeper of a shop "glittering with Punic wares," and probably this type was familiar at Rome.

The drama in its main plot is one of intrigue, namely, the slave's plan to get money for his master, but the motive of "recognition" plays a part in the *dénouement*, for *Hanno* discovers at Calydon two long-lost daughters and a nephew who is the lover of one of them. These two motives are apparently derived from separate originals, and are interwoven by Plautus with reasonable skill; they read like a very ordinary translation of a Greek comedy. The whole of the fifth act, however, at least as far as l. 1030, with its speeches in the Carthaginian language, and their misinterpretation by word sounds into Latin, may be accounted original to Plautus, as will be shown in detail later in our enquiry. The play is, in fact, a clear case of *contaminatio*—the *Καρχηδόσιος* of some unknown author (if we may accept the information in the post-Plautine prologue) plus part of an unnamed play, plus an original composition of Plautus himself. *Hanno*, amusing enough in Plautus' section of the work, is not exploited to the full. Indeed, when once he

begins *latine loqui*, he discards all the enchantment of a foreigner except his strange long robe. He has none of the sinister magnetism of Mr Wu, nor even the lighter comic lines of Mr Hook of Holland. Plautus has seized an excellent idea, but he has not nearly done it justice. He ought to have worked over the beginning and end of the play, in order to make it harmonise with his original contribution.

This, presumably his first, attempt at *contaminatio* was thus creditable, but not brilliant. We come now to a later effort. The *Miles Gloriosus* undoubtedly suffers from faulty construction. The cause of this has been the subject of considerable discussion, some critics believing that it is the result of late confusion of two variant acting editions. It seems far more probable, however, that it is due to *contaminatio* by the author himself. A brief examination of the plot will make this clear.

The first act introduces *Pyrgopolinices*, the *miles*, who keeps imprisoned in his house at Ephesus the beautiful *Philocomasium*, whom he has carried off from Athens. He has just become the recipient, from a pirate friend, of a gift, namely the captive *Palaestrio*, the slave of the girl's lover *Pleusicles*. The latter, hearing thus of his lady's whereabouts, comes to Ephesus and resides next door to the *miles*, at the house of his father's hospitable friend *Periplectomenus*, and by means of a secret door in the party-wall between the houses, gains communication with *Philocomasium*. Their endearments are, however, observed through the *impluvium* by a slave of the *miles*, and in the second act of the play, the faithful *Palaestrio* expends much ingenuity in persuading this worthy that the girl in question is *Philocomasium's* twin sister, and that the scandal he suspects does not exist.

Here the story might satisfactorily end, but with the third act it takes a wholly new departure. *Palaestrio* resolves to overreach the *miles* by deluding him into the belief that he is loved to distraction by the wife of his neighbour *Periplectomenus*. This act is long, and the slight progress of the plot is quite out of proportion to its length. The last two acts unfold the execution of *Palaestrio's* scheme, which entails the rescue of *Philocomasium* by her lover, and the proper punishment of the amorous *miles*.

The loose construction of the play is shown not only in the general outline of the plot, which is clearly the fusion of two distinct stories, but in various details: for instance, the parasite who forms such an excellent foil to the *miles* in the first act, is completely missing from the rest of the play. It is, however, impossible not to feel that the intensely vivid portrayal of the characters, and the excellent boisterous fun of the whole thing, would, in the opinion of the Roman spectators, do much to gloss over the deficiencies of a badly patched plot. The details of the play, as will be seen later, have been considerably Romanised, and the general effect here is much more entertaining than that of the *Poenulus*.

Possibly the *Stichus*, a weak, uninspired composition, is another example of *contaminatio*, but it is significant that in his later plays Plautus never had recourse to this process. Probably he concluded that the amount of labour (always limited, if we may believe Horace) that he was prepared to give to it, was not worth the results obtained.

3. THE *RUDENS*: THE INTRODUCTION OF ROMANCE

Much has been written about the dawn of romanticism in Greek literature at the period to which the New Comedy belongs. The comedy itself was, in fact, an immediate product of this innovation of feeling; it was the expression of individual interests, and of the love of pathos and emotion for their own sake. The Alexandrine love elegies were but the beginning of the vast stream of sentimental fiction which flowed with vigour even down to late Byzantine times. From Menander, Plautus, and Terence, we gain a fairly clear idea of the main features of this romanticism as it appeared upon the stage. The hapless lover, who feeds his grief not so much on silence as on soliloquy, is now the most important member of society, and *Diniarchus* (in the *Truculentus*) communing with himself for the space of a hundred lines on the sorrows of love, is suffering from an interesting melancholy, which later received a new impetus from the Renaissance, and has immortalised countless victims from Petrarch down to the present day. Distressed maidens, too, formerly a negligible quantity in Greek literature, have now to be rescued or pursued so frequently from the other ends of the earth, or at least from the other side of the Aegean, that it becomes a habit with them. *Pasicompsa* (in the *Mercator*) is but one of many examples.

In Plautus, the *Rudens* is one of the best instances of this kind of literature. The love interest is strong, not only in the dramatic adventures of the hero *Plesidippus*, but also in the passing fancy of *Sceparnio* for the pretty serving-maid; the delightful humour of the slave's obsequiousness in performing menial services for her sake, is equalled by the

pleasantry of his assertion in a later scene that he could serve either heroine with impartial devotion. The romanticism of the play, however, is not confined to this feature, which is common to most of Plautus' dramas. Far more than any other play, the *Rudens* has a tendency to reveal the natural scenery in which the story is supposed to be set. The characters, at the opening, are all somewhat breathless after the raging tempest of the previous night, a tempest which is said to have blown off the roofs and shattered the windows of all the neighbouring houses, including that of *Daemones*, which forms the background of the stage; and by manifold little touches Plautus indicates the clear sunny morning, in which the only reminiscence of the departed storm is the somewhat agitated surf which breaks upon the beach close at hand.

This is going farther than the majority of plays in the New Comedy, but it is in line with other branches of Greek literature of that period. It is due to the fact that poetry had come under the influence of painting (itself now growing sentimental), and was beginning to regard nature with the eyes of Art. When the sun rose in Homer, it simply "gave light" to the world; its rise in Alexandrine writers is adorned with a thousand pictorial touches which modern romance has rendered indispensable to our thought.

This great wave of Hellenistic emotion is in singular contrast with the reserve of ancient Greece, and certainly no less with the marked austerity of early Rome. Until towards the end of the third century B.C., Roman literature was practically destitute of romance. Indeed, the people were not prepared for it until Roman supremacy was fairly well established in and beyond Italy, when time and

interest were afforded for relaxation from the continuous strain of a warfaring existence. Credit is due to Plautus and to his contemporary Naevius, in that they perceived that Rome was ready for this element, and catered efficiently for the new need. The timely introduction into literature of romance, of which the *Rudens* is a specimen, denotes a certain amount of originality, even if the work itself takes the form of translation. Greek romance was always a hardy growth, self-sufficing to a large extent, and typical of a literature which was always accustomed to take little and to give much. It is not strange that Rome was content to adopt it in its existing form, without attempting to modify it or to blend it with any quality of her own. The gift of Menander and his fellow-dramatists to Plautus was no more and no less than what, in a far more advanced and literary age, Ovid took from Callimachus.

An interesting parallel occurs in the thirteenth century A.D., when Greece and the Aegean islands passed under the rule of Frank invaders, the exponents of western chivalry. The resulting harvest of romances, including stories such as *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, and *Lybistros and Rhodamne*, is essentially Greek in origin, and all the western touches, unmistakably inherited from the French *romans d'aventure*, are adventitious and decorative.

Thus it was not once only that stories and motives of romance travelled from Greece to the West, and proved strong enough to impart to a new literature the power and freshness which had characterised the old.

4. THE *PSEUDOLUS* AND THE *TRUCULENTUS*:
PLAUTUS' IDEAL

Quam gaudebat...Truculento Plautus, quam Pseudolo!

If this tradition, preserved by Cicero, be true—and we have no reasonable ground for doubting it—it is interesting to consider what there was in these two plays that gave Plautus such particular satisfaction. It is true that an artist often singles out for his personal preference one of his works which all critics unite in placing lower in their estimate: Milton, for instance, stands almost alone in regarding *Paradise Regained* as the most precious monument to his genius. Yet it is probable that the artist himself, in selecting his favourite work, is conscious of something in it most consonant with his own personality. He who, in the process of creation, has experienced every wonderful moment of inspiration, and every despairing difficulty, will know exactly how much of himself, and how much of his best, he has put into a certain work, and will be linked with it by all the sympathy natural towards a most cherished offspring. That is why it is important, in considering the original element in Plautus, to bear in mind these two plays as coming nearest to the author's own ideal of composition.

Later opinion has gone fully with his affection for the *Pseudolus*, from A. Gellius, who called it a *comoedia festiuissima*, to Lorenz, who, apparently with Plautus himself, declared it to be the creation of the writer's own genius more than any other play. Plautus here revels in the high dramatic invention bequeathed to him by the original Greek author, and all his own most exuberant and spontaneous powers are brought into action to deck it in the best Plautine beauty.

The native Roman element is, as we shall see, particularly strong. The people of that age required broad and striking effects, and in the *Pseudolus* they certainly found them. The plot is one of the familiar *frustrationes in comoediis*, which, so long as they were well worked out, were at that time not too much hackneyed to please. The language of the play is marked by untrammelled flights of native idiom. The delineation of the characters is completely realistic. The lover *Calidorus*, "sighing like a furnace," *Ballio*, with his unusual depths of heartless villainy, and the sycophant, with his inordinate cleverness, are set with consummate skill to interplay with the unforgettable Puck-like creation which is *Pseudolus*, and which, we may well believe, is nearly akin to a great part of Plautus himself.

The *Truculentus* is, according to modern canons, a less pleasant play. Yet, inasmuch as Plautus resembled Zola in a certain delight in following human corruption into its last retreats, he may have felt some pride in his extraordinarily detailed study of the woman *Phronesium*. The love-lorn braggart captain *Stratophanes*, too, certainly plays his part with what Hazlitt was fond of calling "gusto." The taming of the dour *Truculentus* is prettily, though slightly, done; as is often the case with Plautus' plays, it is disappointing to find so little made of the suggestions in the title. Nevertheless, the play has its very broad humour, its decided swing of action, and its most gifted observation of the large faults, small foibles, and delicate lighter lines of human character, qualities which go far to make up the quintessence of Plautinism; and it was probably of these that Plautus was most conscious when he judged this drama as belonging to his best work.

The *Pseudolus* is dated by the didascalia in 191 B.C. It would in any case be unreasonable to suppose that these two plays were the last works of Plautus, for, had they been, there would have remained so little of his life in which he could rejoice in their merits, that Cicero's tradition would have had no time to form; but they certainly belong to the period of his maturer genius, and as such they are to be appreciated.

Lastly, they are both quickened by a strong Roman element, and it is not least the reminiscences of Rome, Italy, and all the nearest and most precious associations, that would endear these two plays to the heart of their creator.

5. THE AMPHITRUO: THE GIFT OF EURIPIDES

The considerable influence of Euripides upon Plautus has been much discussed and is universally admitted. Leo rightly points out that the New Comedy was rooted more in Euripidean tragedy than in the Old Comedy, and though he goes much too far in setting out his very quaint parallels between passages of Euripides and of Plautus, we cannot fail to see that, in the general treatment and structure of the plays, Plautus and Menander are at a point of development but little beyond that reached by the tragic dramatist in the later part of his career.

The *Amphitruo*, however, is the gift of Euripides in quite a different way, and calls for special comment. The play is constructed on a tragic basis which would satisfy even our most ardent analysts of Euripidean drama:

1—152, prologue.

153—462, agon between *Mercurius* and *Sosia*.

463—550, a kind of **stasimon** (at any rate the action remains “stationary”).

551—632, **agon** between *Amphitruo* and *Sosia*.

633—983, **agon** between *Alcmena* and *Amphitruo*, the latter partly in the person of *Juppiter*.

984—1052, another **stasimon**.

1053—1130, **messenger's speech**, with **threnos**.

1131—1143, **deus ex machina**.

1144—1145, *Amphitruo* as chorus, “Well, I never!”

We do not know that Euripides wrote an *Amphitruo*, but he certainly wrote an *Alcmena*, and that Plautus had at least heard of it is proved by l. 86 of the *Rudens*¹. Several fragments of it are extant, but none are very certain parallels to any passages in the Roman version.

The Plautine story is the well-known Greek legend of *Juppiter*, *Alcmene*, and *Amphitruo*. The whole drama, in an entirely comic vein, is played in the stately world of mythology, and from the post-Plautine prologue we learn that such a work was termed *tragico-comoedia*. The Greek corresponding to this is *ίλαροτραγωδία*, and it has been suggested that the *Amphitruo* was based on an original by the Sicilian Rhinthon, who is known to have written dramas of this kind. This is not the place to discuss in detail Plautus' debt to Sicily; in this instance it probably does not go beyond the barest suggestion of the general idea.

Another suggestion concerning the *Amphitruo* is that the original was by a writer of the New Comedy. This seems nearer to the truth, and yet it is not quite in line with the probabilities. One of the main features of Plautus' play is that it is so thoroughly Roman in every detail. *Amphitruo*

¹ *non uentus fuit, uerum Alcmena Euripidi.*

is just a typical Roman general. His campaign against the Teleboans has been conducted according to Roman methods (as will be seen later in detail). He returns home to the tune of Roman sacrifices and auspices, and is greeted by a wife who is the noblest embodiment of the Roman matron that ever walked the Roman stage.

The other outstanding feature of the play is its extraordinary vivacity and spontaneity. Tremendously alive as most of Plautus' plays are, they hardly touch the unflagging vigour of the *Amphitruo*. In the scenes with the slave *Sosia*, especially, the fun is fast and furious. His complete bewilderment when he meets Mercury arrayed as his double, his semi-conviction that he is not himself, but another man, his further mental entanglements when he tries to explain the novel situation to his master, and his almost pathetic last appeal to *Alcmena* to elucidate the puzzle, are all portrayed by a master-mind. No part of the play, from the first line to the last, reads like a translation. By far the most probable conclusion at which the reader can arrive, is that it is a direct burlesque of Euripides by Plautus, who has taken the old Greek story and inserted it into the ordinary life of his contemporary Romans. Burlesque is often considered a cheap form of literature, but in those days it was not so hackneyed as it is now, and a comparison of this play with the versions of Molière and Dryden is sufficient to show that it cannot be less than a mature work of a supreme dramatist, tossed off, perhaps, as the pastime of a light or hurried hour, but no unworthy product of a mind, which, beyond rich and rare gifts of its own, owed much to the Euripidean school in which it had unconsciously trained itself.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINAL ELEMENT

1. HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS

Der den Augenblick ergreift,
Das ist der rechte Mann.

Goethe.

It is rather a surprise to find historical allusions in Plautus. The New Comedy probably contained little of the kind. It was almost wholly social, the comedy of domestic life and manners. Besides this lack of suggestion in his model, the Roman poet was confronted with a strict law against the representation of any politics or public personalities upon the stage, a law which was enforced as far as possible by stringent police supervision at each performance. It must however have been felt that essentially popular plays like the Plautine comedy made a stronger appeal by containing brief allusions to contemporary public events, and Plautus, in several instances, defies the censorship and presents us incidentally with a certain amount of material for dating his plays.

In the *M. G.* (l. 211) the attitude of *Palaestrio*, who supports his head on his hand and arm, as if on a column (*os columnatum*), reminds Plautus of his brother-poet Naevius, who was imprisoned for his lampoons on the aristocracy,

particularly on the proud *Metelli*. The imprisonment of Naevius is placed about 210–207 B.C., and the passage was written certainly after the imprisonment began, probably while it was still the subject of common talk, and possibly before the release of the victim. The

allusion is however made more remote by its application, not to Naevis by name, but to a *poeta barbarus*. Plautus here, as frequently elsewhere, uses the word *barbarus* in the sense it would have in his Greek originals, i.e. "not Greek-speaking," and therefore Roman. (Thus in *Poen.* 598, *barbaria* is used as a synonym for Italy.) Such a device has the appearance of being derived direct from the Greek, and would make it difficult for the Roman police to charge the author with an offence against the regulations in question.

In the same play there occurs another historical allusion in the phrase *si harunc Baccharum es* (l. 1016). The frenzied and disreputable orgies which formed the rites of Bacchus were suppressed by a famous decree of the Senate in 186 B.C., but were probably the subject of much comment and speculation before drastic steps were actually taken. Plautus refers again to the same topic, e.g. *Cas.* 979.

The end of the speech of *Auxilium* in the *Cistellaria* contains an important reference to the second Punic war. It is a stirring appeal to the people of Rome to make a final and supreme effort to gain the victory which is already nearly within their grasp. 205 B.C.(?)

Other plays appear to contain references to laws which were inaugurated or repealed during Plautus' lifetime. When *Epidicus*, in the play of that name (224 *seq.*) discourses at length on the wanton and reprehensible extravagance of ladies' dress, he doubtless spoke just about the time of the repeal of the *lex Oppia sumptuaria* in 195. 195 B.C. *Pseud.* 303 alludes to the *lex quiniuicenaria*, the law by which young people under twenty-five were incapable of making contracts. Cicero calls it the *lex Plaetoria*, but its date is unknown.

The *Curculio* (l. 508) contains a reference to the *lex Sempronia de foenore* of 193. But the chief
 193 B.C. interest of this play, from the historical aspect, lies elsewhere. The scene is laid at Epidaurus, outside the temple of Aesculapius. From the *Plutus* of Aristophanes we know what function to expect this highly-esteemed deity to perform. His rôle here is as conventional and blameless as ever. The villain *Cappodax* has spent the night lying in the temple, to cure himself of certain diseases, and in the morning he issues forth, to the delight of the audience, not a whit the better for his experiences. It is all meant to be extremely funny, and a good deal is made of it; but we might believe that it fell a little flat on Roman ears, were there not another factor to be considered. At Rome, the worship of this god was introduced by order of the Sibylline books, on the occasion of the plague of 293, and the deity was brought from Epidaurus in the form of a snake. He had a sanctuary and a much frequented sanatorium on the island of the Tiber. It seems extremely probable that there was some sort of centenary celebration in honour of the god, and Aesculapius being thus prominent in the public mind, Plautus, from the store of Greek comedies at his command, sought and found this particular play to appeal to the popular sense of humour at an opportune moment. This theory is supported, in quite a curious way, by the date of the *lex Sempronia* mentioned above. It may be noted in passing that *Lycus*, the banker, is made to do obeisance to Aesculapius *capite aperto*, a distinctly Roman and not Greek custom.

In *Trin.* 542 we are told of the wonderful powers of endurance of the Syrian slaves, a fact which probably did not force itself particularly on the Roman notice until after

the war with Antiochus in 191. Three lines later, however, their strength is said to be surpassed by that of the Campanians, who, as the result of the *supplicium* inflicted on them for their desertion of Rome in the second Punic war, became so inured to the hardest forms of slavery, that they could excel all other races in endurance of toil. The mention of their name would fill the Roman spectator with a bitter satisfaction at the proper reward of treachery.

191 B.C.

In the *Bacchides* (l. 1073), the slave *Chrysalus*, assuming, like many of his fellows (as will be seen later), the character of a victorious general, begs the spectators not to be surprised at his not celebrating his achievements with a triumph, on the plea *peruulgatum est*. Probably after the four triumphs of the year 189, the Roman people were becoming somewhat *blasé* over these functions, and *Chrysalus* is here hinting at the fact that triumphs, if made too common, were likely to lose their value and prestige.

189 B.C.

References in these plays to Greek history are almost negligible. *Agathocles* is twice mentioned alone (*Pseud.* 532, *Most.* 775), and in *Men.* 407, there is a curious little bit of Sicilian history which seems to stop abruptly with Hiero; this suggests that in the original that monarch has been the subject of prolonged eulogies which Plautus thought would bore a Roman audience, and which he therefore cut out in no very skilful manner.

The Roman history in these plays must be borne in mind as being of great importance, as its source is so indisputably Plautine and not Greek.

2. ROMAN GEOGRAPHY

(a) *Rome*

All roads lead to Rome.

Proverb.

The scene of each play of Plautus is laid in some Greek city, generally Athens, although variants are found, such as Sicyon, Epidamnus, Ephesus and Cyrene. No local colour is attached to any of these places, except perhaps Cyrene, and beyond one or two occasions when an inhabitant of Athens declares his intention of going to the Peiraeus (e.g. *Trin.* 1103) no allusion is made to any local topography. But it was not Plautus' way to leave the situation thus neutral or indifferent. Often, indeed, we forget that we are at Athens or at Calydon, only to realise with a start that we are walking the streets of Rome, with all the setting of immemorial names and associations around us as they surrounded the actors of the plays.

The forum is mentioned so frequently and in such general terms, that, although the word entails a marked suggestion of Rome, we can regard it only as a translation of the New Comedy ἀγορά. There are many other Roman localities in Plautus which are perfectly well defined. The *Capitol* is mentioned at least twice, *Trin.* 84, and *Curc.* 269. In the latter play the speech of the *choragus* describes a kind of route-march through the city. First in the list comes the temple of *Cloacina* (Venus), the "purifier," so called because the Romans at the end of the Sabine war purified themselves with myrtle-branches near her statue: then the *Basilica*, which is referred to also in *Capt.* 815, and is something of a problem, for the first *basilica* (a portico or arcade) that we hear of at Rome was built by Cato the Censor in 184 (the

year of Plautus' death) and called the *basilica Porcia*. The Plautine *basilica* may be an earlier building, otherwise unknown, or an anticipation of something already long planned and discussed by idle tongues: in any case there is no need to agree with certain critics who reject the lines in which it occurs. Next the *choragus* takes us to the *forum*, with its crowd of idle and wealthy loungers: then to the unkind chatterers around the *lacus* (probably the *lacus Curtius*): then to the temple of *Castor*, on the spot where three marble pillars of a later date greet the sight-seer to this day; hence to the "Tuscan region" of doubtful repute, and finally to the *Uelabrum*, with its bakers, butchers, and soothsayers, and others of a motley gathering.

The *Uelabrum* is mentioned also in *Capt.* 489, particularly as the market for delicacies of the table, where the oil-sellers were noted for scheming together to keep up the price of salad-oil. The same play (l. 90) contains a reference to the *Porta Trigemina* (so called from its three archways), which was in one of the busiest parts of Rome, at the corner of the Aventine; here porters and message-carriers took their stand, and *Ergasilus* says he will have to take his place among them to earn a living (cf. *Trin.* 423).

In the *M. G.* (l. 359) the phrase *extra portam* probably refers to the Esquiline Gate, where was the burying-ground of the poor, and where executions took place. In this instance, we may note, the Roman gate is placed at Ephesus. (Cf. *Pseud.* 331, *Cas.* 354.)

(b) *Italy*

Open my heart, and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."

Browning.

It would be strange if the original element in Plautus excluded thoughts of Italy, for Italy was a motherland whose spirit was peculiarly present in the hearts of all her sons. We do not expect from a comic poet such a panegyric as Vergil rendered her in later times; indeed, the date alone would be sufficient explanation of the fact that Plautus could make no attempt at Vergil's "conscious appeal to a nation." The New Comedy of Greece was singularly devoid of national interests, and it is thus all the more remarkable that in the translation of such a literature we find foreshadowed a feeling which attained conscious expression only after years more of silent development. The Hannibalic war did much to awaken and strengthen this feeling. Marsian and Apulian had fought side by side in the Roman army, and had begun to forget the old clan distinctions, and to take a more kindly interest in one another. It was, moreover, a period of road-building, and great arteries like the *Via Flaminia* (220) and the *Via Aemilia* (190) did much to link widely-separated regions into a common thought and kinship. Sentiment became less local and detached. This new interest in Italy as a whole does not take in Plautus the form of discourses on the charm of her natural scenery, for Plautus lived in a comparatively unlettered age which had not attained the power of reflection necessary to appreciate the beauty which is so familiar as to be unnoticed. His few descriptions of scenery are limited to seascapes, a characteristically Greek attitude of mind, derived probably direct

from his original. His references to the habits and thoughts of the Italian countryside will be considered later. Here we are concerned only with definite allusions to various localities in the peninsula.

A single bad pun (*Most.* 770) is his only reference to his birthplace, *Sarsina* in Umbria. Even this has no personal connotation, though it may have elicited an extra roar of enthusiasm from an audience acquainted with his origin. *Capt.* 160 *seq.* contains a string of puns on a number of Italian place-names—*pistor*, a miller, and *Pistoria*, a town in Etruria; *panis*, a loaf, and *Panna*, a town in Samnium; *placenta*, a cake, and *Placentia*, in Cis-padane Gaul; and so on. In a later passage (881 *seq.*) of the same play we find a similar volley of expletives, beginning with *Kόρα*, which besides being the Greek name of Proserpine, was the name of a town in Latium, and led the excited parasite *Ergasilus*, by a natural train of ideas, to swear by all the other towns in Latium he could think of—*Praeneste*, *Signia*, *Frusino*, *Alatrium*. In a different country, after more than two thousand years, this is a cold and uninspiring theme: but it is very significant.

Praeneste is ridiculed for its provincialism in *Trin.* 609, inasmuch as it was addicted to the expression *tam modo*; and in *Truc.* 691 it is assailed for dropping unaccented syllables in its pronunciation, and saying, for instance, *conea* instead of *ciconia*. Finally, a fragment of the first act of the *Bacchides* seems to give it a reputation for bragging and conceit. The reason why this city should be singled out as an object of popular raillery is a little obscure. By its loyalty during the recent war it had, together with Tibur and the neighbouring colonies, done much to save the state,

but after the war its treatment by Rome became rather a delicate question. Perhaps its resentment at increased military service and curtailed allotments was sufficient to raise a careless laugh among the populace of victorious Rome.

Similarly *Aminula* is decried in *M. G.* 648, where *Periplectomenus* pointedly states that his birthplace was not this little town of Apulia, but Ephesus. He thus suggests that his Hellenism was the genuine article, not the superficial counterfeit which was found among the Apulians, who had notorious aspirations in that direction.

There are references to *Capua* (*Rud.* 631), *Sutrium* (*Cas.* 524), *Arretium* (fr. of the *Fretum*), *Lavinia* (*Truc.* 275, reading doubtful), Tarentine sheep (*Truc.* 649), Tuscan morals (*Vist.* 562), Campanian carpets (*Ps.* 146), and, to crown the list, the fruit of the celebrated Massic vine (*Ps.* 1303), which still awaited Horace's immortalising eulogy.

It is interesting to note that the phrase *tricae* (meaning "nonsense," e.g. *Curc.* 613) is (at least according to Pliny, whose testimony must not be overvalued) taken from *Trica*, the name of a small place in Apulia. In the same way Martial uses *Apina*, a poor town of the same district.

(c) *The rest of the Roman world*

Chi sa la strada, può andar di trotto.

Italian proverb.

By the age of Plautus, Rome was becoming conscious of a large Mediterranean world beyond the compass of its own peninsula. Greece too had been aware of much the same world, but Rome naturally surveyed it from a different angle. The country which she regarded from a particularly

Roman and revised standpoint was of course Greece itself, and when this standpoint appears in Plautus it must be noted as foreign to the original Greek. A Greek, for instance, would never use the word *pergraecari*, or its equivalent, as Plautus frequently does (e.g. *Truc.* 88, *Most.* 960), meaning "to indulge in excessively hilarious carousals": neither would he apply the adjective "Greek" to the ordinary things of his life, any more than a Scot would talk of a "Scotch mist" in the manner of the detached Southron. In Plautus we find Greek caskets (*Truc.* 55), Greek sweating-baths (*Stich.* 226) and Greek honour, or rather the lack of it (*Asin.* 199), and many other commodities from that side of the Adriatic.

Turning farther to the west than the Greek could easily penetrate in thought, we find a reference to Gaul in one of the fragments, to the *Boii* (*Capt.* 888), to the people of *Massilia* (*Cas.* 963) bearing out what Cicero says of their character in his speech *pro Flacco*; and to the *Turdetani* of Spain (*Capt.* 163). In the phrase *Hilurica facies*, and in the innumerable references to things Sicilian, Greek and Roman meet on common ground, and the originality thereof may be attributed to either with equal probability.

Names of places in the extreme East of the Mediterranean, and beyond (which are comparatively rare in Plautus) were probably, on the whole, taken direct from the Greek drama. One remembers, for instance, that the despairing lover in Menander's *Samia* called for his cloak and sword and swore to hide his diminished head in Bactria or Caria. *Curculio's* mission to Caria had thus probably more glamour of daring to his Roman audience than it deserved.

3. MILITARY LIFE

Debellare superbos.

Vergil.

Plautus during his lifetime witnessed the whole of the second Punic war. It was a war which had come almost to the gates of Rome, and which, by reason of its length and its fierceness, and the issues which it involved, made a far greater impression on the Romans than any other conflict in their whole history. It opened the mind of a people already warlike to wider ideas and more determined ambitions. Every Roman was a thorough soldier at heart, and in his amusements as well as in his sterner occupations, anything of a military flavour was sure to make a welcome appeal.

This accounts in one way for the prominence of things military in the plays of Plautus. It must however be remembered that a certain warlike tendency was a heritage which came to the Roman stage along with many other features from the New Comedy. The old plays too were written in an age which rivalled the period of the Carthaginian conflict in the "pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war," and probably in the years following the death of Alexander, war was as much a necessity of thought as it has been at any time. It seems impossible, however, that a man of such tremendous creative and energising power as Plautus should not have infused into his comedies something of the warlike strength and fervour of the men around him, something, in fact, of the vitality of his own experience.

The character which comes first to one's mind in considering this aspect of the Plautine comedy is *Pyrgopolinices*, in the *Miles Gloriosus*. This play, as we learn from l. 86,

is founded on the Ἀλαζών of a Greek poet now unknown to us.

ἡ ἀλαζονεία, says Theophrastus, δόξει εἶναι προσποιήσις τις ἀγαθῶν οὐκ ὄντων, ὁ δὲ ἀλαζών τοιοῦτός τις, οἷος... συνοδοιπόρου δὲ ἀπολαῦσαι ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ δεινός, λέγων, ὡς μετ' Ἀλεξάνδρου ἐστρατεύσατο, καὶ ὕπως αὐτῷ εἶχε, καὶ ὅσα λιθοκόλλητα ποτήρια ἐκόμισε...καὶ ταῦτα φῆσαι, οὐδαμοῦ ἐκ τῆς πόλεως ἀποδεδημηκώς.

Deforme est, says Cicero, de se ipsum praedicare, falsa praesertim, et cum irrisione audientium imitari militem gloriosum.

"I am a rogue," says Falstaff, "if I were not at half-sword with a dozen of them two hours together. I have 'scaped by miracle. I am eight times thrust through the doublet, four through the hose; my buckler cut through and through; my sword hacked like a hand-saw—*ecce signum.*"

From this, even if our own experience failed us, we might conclude that the character exploited by Plautus in this play is universal rather than particular, and we should hesitate to assert that *Pyrgopolinices* was essentially Greek or essentially Roman. It is quite obvious that he is not mechanically lifted out of a foreign play. He breathes a life of his own, which has made him one of the most famous characters in all literature. He is childishly stupid and almost incredibly vain, and somehow all his characteristics are stamped with a Roman die. He calls on *Mars*, and talks of his *legiones* and the hostile *peditastelli*: he wears a *clupeus*, a circular iron shield adopted by the Romans from the Etruscans. His conversation in the first scene with the fawning parasite *Artotrogus*, brings out his inordinate conceit in full measure: the parasite recalls his friend's glorious

conflicts in Cilicia, in Scytholatronia, and other strange places, and the thirty men of Sardis, and the sixty of Macedonia, whom he slew in one day. "How many altogether?" enquires *Pyrgopolinices*. "Seven thousand," stoutly answers his ally—a method of arithmetic shared by Livy and the modern press.

The military atmosphere infects the other characters of the play. The wise and old *Periplectomenus* lays his plans (l. 219) against the *miles* as a general schemes his campaign, bidding his comrades lead round their army by a pass, besiege the enemy, cut off his supplies, and guard the road which their own A.S.C. is to pass along.

The play abounds in stray technicalities taken from the Roman military system, e.g. *Palaestrio* in l. 815—*si centuriati bene sunt munuplares mei*, and l. 266—*ad eum vineam pluteosque agam*, just as the Great War has almost led some of us to think of ordinary things in terms of platoons and counter-attacks.

Other plays of Plautus contain *milites gloriosi* of smaller fame. Very similar to our last hero is *Stratophanes* in the *Truculentus*, who proudly and bluntly assures us that his prowess is executed in deeds rather than assumed in wordy harangues to a bored audience, and who roars out a playful enquiry whether his supposed newly-born son has yet joined his legion and brought back from war the spoils of victory. This soldier too fights under the kind auspices of *Mars*. Other characters of the same type are *Polymachaeroplaxides* (*Pseudolus*), *Antamoenides* (*Poenulus*), *Therapontigonus Plagidorus* (*Curculio*), *Cleomachus* (*Bacchides*) and *Stratippocles* (*Epidicus*). All these people produce records of glorious achievement as long as their highly suggestive names.

Much as we ridicule their small faults and foibles, we feel that Plautus treats them as Shakespeare treats Falstaff, with a very human sympathy, because probably he had known a great many of them personally, and hailed them as his brothers.

We find the military element just as strong, but differently presented, in the *Amphitruo*. The Greek origin of this story is obvious, and has been already discussed. The point that concerns us here is that *Amphitruo* himself is a thoroughly Roman general. In particular, Sosia's account of his campaign against the Teleboans, beginning l. 188,

Victores uictis hostibus legiones reueniunt domum,

is most remarkably Roman in style. Indeed, one is tempted to postulate a family-tree, beginning with an unknown ancestor, from whom are descended the whole of Livy and this little piece of Plautus. The passage is, even in details, extraordinarily Livian. For the use of cavalry at the end of a battle, we may compare the tactics of Tarquin at the end of the Sabine war, Livy i. 37. The *stentes principes* of Plautus recall the crestfallen Samnites of Livy ix. 45, to whom, *suppliciter agentibus*, the Romans granted peace: such a frame of mind in an enemy was one in which Rome took a peculiar and widely expressed delight. The slave *Sosia* follows his master in all things with great zeal and an inexhaustible treasury of humour. *Impera, imperium exsequar* (l. 956) is his obliging attitude. The *legio* figures largely in his conversation, and when the blows of *Mercury* rain upon his hapless person, his thoughts turn instinctively to the formalities of peace-making. He must have been a typical military servant; probably the generals who fought against Hannibal were very familiar with the blessings and

discomforts which accrued from the type. The whole play is absolutely Roman in tone, largely because the military atmosphere is so thoroughly Roman in detail. In such a character, the *Amphitruo* stands alone among the plays of Plautus.

It is not only in the official military circles of the Plautine world that we find the martial element. There is no *rôle* which his intriguing slaves more love to adopt in the prosecution of their schemes than that of a renowned and particularly successful general. The rascal, whose every morrow may bring the scourge or the scaffold, faces the world quite unabashed, and dreams the greatest of all Roman dreams, the life of a general. This seems to be a peculiarly Roman trait. Even if the original Greek held the germ of the idea, Plautus, we may fairly urge, amplified it, and by a consistent use of Roman military technicalities, gave it a thoroughly Roman flavour.

Pseudolus is perhaps the best example. He plans his campaign (l. 574 *seq.*) according to his lights, and though his nebulous course of action would make the expert gasp, his enthusiasm is worthy of the great *maiores* whom the Roman slave can own only in fancy. He closes with the enemy, then invests their city, after this brings up his legions and sets them forth in array for battle: then he proceeds to divide the spoils, and sees as in a vision that the glory of his deeds will never die. In this we are reminded of the peculiar ideas of mediaeval warfare entertained by the dreaming hero in the second act of "When knights were bold."

Of all the Plautine slaves who had need of skilled tactics to extricate them from the direst consequences of their intriguing, none was in a more urgent plight than the cele-

brated *Tranio* in the *Mostellaria*. Indeed, after he has "led out his legions," and "withdrawn his maniples to safety," he feels compelled, like many a sorely-trying consul, to call an imaginary senate, from which he sees himself summarily ejected, and reduced to the devices of a turbulent and inconsequent mob. *Stasimus* in the *Trinummus* appears as a military servant who finds it advisable to abandon his present mode of life. *Non sisti potest*—"things are past mending"—is his verdict and he decides to take up his knapsack and buckle on his shield, and depart to other scenes of action.

The following are examples of the numerous Roman military technicalities scattered through the ordinary conversation of Plautus: *imperator* (*Capt.* 307, *Ps.* 1171), *triumphus* (*Ps.* 1051), *adscriptiui* (*Men.* 183), *manuplares* (*Most.* 312, 1048, *Truc.* 491), *maniplatim* (*Ps.* 181), *uelitatio* (*Rud.* 525), *dilectus* (*Rud.* 1279), *pro infrequente militia* (*Truc.* 230), *concenturiare* (*Trin.* 1002, *Ps.* 572, *Curc.* 585), *stipendium* (*Epid.* 38, *Most.* 131), *conlatis signis* (*Cas.* 352), *castra* (*Epid.* 381), *moenia* (*Rud.* 692), weapons and engines such as *ballista*, *catapulta*, *aries* (*Capt.* 796, *Pers.* 28, *Trin.* 668), *clauator* (*Rud.* 804).

It is instructive to note that Greek military technicalities figure in our author hardly at all. There is the *machaera* curiously attributed to *Pyrgopolinices* in the *Miles Gloriosus*, and appearing again *Ps.* 735. The word *strategus* appears occasionally, e.g. *Stich.* 702 and *Curc.* 285, and *stratioticus*, e.g. *Ps.* 918; but these are of interest as illustrating the introduction of Greek words into the ordinary Latin language, rather than from the military point of view.

4. POLITICS AND LEGAL CUSTOMS

Suppose I take a spurt, and mix
 Among the wilds o' politics,
 Electors and elected.

Burns.

In trying to ascertain the original element in Plautus under this heading, we find ourselves upon somewhat difficult ground. It is true that the Roman mind ran always in a legal groove. From the evolution of the Twelve Tables down to the illustrious jurists of the later Empire the stream of Roman law continued in a perfectly steady course. Legal formalities regulated the ordinary life of the people at every turn, and legal formulæ were on their lips in even the most ordinary conversation. Law was to them an ever-living interest, and it appears quite natural and characteristic that this trait should be prominent in Roman comedy such as that of Plautus. At the same time it must be remembered that the Greeks too possessed this interest in law to a very marked degree. *Philocleon* of the *Wasps* was not so unique in his bent as his slave might lead us to suppose¹. There was perhaps this difference between the nations, that while the average Greek was absorbed in the particular legal problem of the moment, the Roman created and constructed forms and institutions which should carry on all future generations. Rome was more conscious of her permanent value, and worked not only for the immediate to-morrow, but even for the far-off and hardly suspected barbarians who were to deem it their greatest glory to deck themselves in some shreds of her purple.

¹ I. 88. φιληλιαστής ἐστὶν ὡς οὐδείς ἀνὴρ.

Probably political thought figured less largely in the New Comedy (which was domestic, and had a narrower outlook) than in Plautus. Nevertheless, to a certain extent the legal and political formulae of the Roman writer are mere translations from the Greek. Most of his praetors, for instance, were probably in the beginning archons, and although their new name has a Roman implication, we cannot on that account attribute originality to Plautus. It is unusually difficult to know exactly where to draw the line in this matter, and although the long list of Roman technicalities about to be detailed are in themselves very suggestive, the fact of translation must be borne in mind, and a certain reserve exercised in assigning to Plautus original thought in this respect.

In reading Plautus we run through practically the whole gamut of magistrates who took upon themselves care for the well-being of Rome. There are two notable exceptions—the consul and the censor are never mentioned. Perhaps their honourable station was felt to be above the flippancy of comedy; perhaps they were mentioned in plays now lost, and the merest chance has robbed us of references to them. Their colleagues appear in formidable array. There is mention of a *dictator* (*Ps.* 416, *Trin.* 695), while in *Pers.* 770 the fascinating *Lemniselenis* is called a *dictatrix*; *praetor* (very frequently, e.g. *Capt.* 450, 505, *Merc.* 664); *tribunus* (humorously, *Pers.* 22); *quaestor* (*Bacch.* 1075); *aedilis* (*Capt.* 823, *Pers.* 160; *Truc.* 557, where they are called *publici*, the officials responsible for the cleanliness of the city; *Rud.* 373, where Neptune, in his capacity of shipwrecker, is referred to as a discriminating aedile); *tresviri*, who, as the overseers of prisons and of punishments generally,

are made much of, as a natural consequence of the usual trend of plot in Plautus (*Amph.* 155, *Asin.* 131, *Pers.* 72, *Aul.* 416); likewise their attendant *lictiores* (*Asin.* 575, the *octo ualidi* of *Amph.* 160); and the *reciperatores*, a board for summary trial especially in cases concerning property (*Rud.* 1282, *Bacch.* 270). Moreover, the term *praefectura* occurs (*Capt.* 907, *Cas.* 99), and *prouincia*, as a magistrate's sphere of administration, is very common (e.g. *Capt.* 474, *M. G.* 1159, *Cas.* 103). None of these officials figure as persons in the drama. They are passing references and, in a way, extraordinarily remote from the men of the same titles who swayed the fierce political emotions of the Rome of that day. They are names whose utterance instigated no man to sing an election song or to stab his rival voter at the poll. The police regulations already referred to are probably responsible for their sojourn in a calmer sphere.

The word *senatus* is found quite frequently, but it generally bears the rather vague connotation of "consultation," e.g. *Epid.* 159, *iam senatum conuocabo in corde consiliarium* (cf. *Asin.* 871, *Aul.* 549). In *M. G.* 594, *Periplectomenus*, pursuing his designs against the *miles*, sees the possibility of calling a *frequens senatus* of his supporters, and at the close of the scene hastens to meet it, *ne, dum absum, illis sortitus fuat*. This latter phrase is an allusion to the *sortitio prouinciarum* of the Roman senate; as the provinces were allotted to the different magistrates, so at the coming conference there would be assigned to each character his or her part in overreaching the victim. In *Cas.* 536 *Cleustrata* refers ironically to her husband as the *senatus columen*, and the phrase recurs *Epid.* 189.

The *Captiui* provides an allusion to the *comitia tributa*

(l. 476) and the *comitia centuriata* (l. 155, in the phrase *imperare exercitum*). The latter body also appears specifically in *Ps.* 1232. The common remark, uttered, for instance, by the petrified *Diniarchus* (*Truc.* 819), *meo illic nunc sunt capiti comitia*, seems to be a colloquial expression for the verge of a catastrophe. In *Ps.* 748 we find the word *plebiscitum*.

Judicial matters figure largely in these plays. In the *Poenulus* and the *Rudens*, for example, a good deal of the plot turns on legal actions, but as far as details go, the processes seem to be more or less common to Greece and Rome. Equivalent to the *advocati* who are characters in the former play and mentioned in the latter (l. 890), the Greeks had *κλητῆρες* (e.g. *Wasps*, 1408), the witnesses who gave evidence that the summons had been served. They correspond exactly to the phrase *licet antestari* which saved Horace from his celebrated dilemma on the Sacred Way¹. In fact this very word *antestari* occurs *Pers.* 747 and *Curc.* 621. Other ways of summoning an opponent are found in *Rud.* 718 (*te ego appello, tecum ago*) and *Asin.* 480 (*in ius uoco te*).

Other judicial phrases in Plautus are: *rem facesso* (*Rud.* 1061, "I am a plaintiff"); *in ius rapiam exsulem* (*Rud.* 859, meaning an act of ejection, *ἐξούλης δίκη*); *uades* (*Pers.* 289, cf. *Aul.* 319); *iure factum iudico* (*M. G.* 1435); *diem dicam* (*Capt.* 494); *ubi res prolatae sunt* (*Capt.* 78, "when business is adjourned"); [*uenter gutturque*] *resident* [*essurialis*] *ferias* (*Capt.* 468, cf. *feriae residentur* in *Cic. Leg.* II. xxii. 55). In *Pers.* 143 the word *decuria*, properly a board of judges, is used in jocular fashion for a circle of boon companions.

¹ *Sat.* I. ix. 76.

The formalities of colonisation are twice mentioned. *Epidicus* in a flight of metaphor talks (l. 343) of carrying provisions into his colony under his own auspices; and the enraged *Simo* (*Ps.* 1100) threatens to make *Pseudolus* give his name to the colony of *Molae*, i.e. the millstones which were often driven by delinquent slaves.

The phrase *sine sacris hereditas* (*Capt.* 775, *Trin.* 484) was a Roman proverb for "a rose without a thorn." Roman estates were so often encumbered with religious dues that an estate not so vexed was a singularly lucky windfall. *Sacra priuata perpetua manento* was a provision of the Twelve Tables.

Other legal terms found are: *usu fecisti tuom* (*Amph.* 375), *scriptura* (the tax paid on public pastures, *Truc.* 144), *tuas res tibi habeto* (the injunction of a husband to the wife he is divorcing, *Trin.* 266, cf. *Amph.* 928), and *ciuis immunis* (a citizen exempt from the payment of taxes, *Trin.* 350).

So thoroughly has Plautus Romanised this section of his world, that only the rarest traces are left of unmistakably Greek institutions. Besides *agoranomi* (clerks of the market, *Capt.* 824, *Curc.* 285) and *demarchi* (presidents of the *demos*, *Curc.* 286) there is the *magister curiae* of *Aul.* 107, who must really represent the *τριπτιάρχης*, for such distributions as are here described were for long common in Greece, but not in Rome before the Empire. In *Cist.* 100, there is a reference to the Athenian law that the nearest kinsman of an orphan heiress (*ἡ ἐπίκληρος*) should be obliged to marry her; thus *Selenium* is in despair that her lover *Alcesimarchus* will needs take to wife his kinswoman, *sua cognata Lemniensis*. The word *συγγραφή* in Demosthenes and other Greek writers means a written bond, and as *syngraphus* it has this meaning

in *Asin.* 238, 746; in *Capt.* 450, 506, it appears to mean a passport. Probably it is another illustration of the incorporation of Greek words into the Latin language, and is to be considered as interesting chiefly from the linguistic point of view.

On the whole we may conclude that when Plautus met in his originals any legal institutions differing profoundly from those at Rome, he discarded them. Of things that presented themselves to him as more normal, he gave a rough approximation, necessarily ignoring the subtle distinctions which mean so much to the modern student of antiquities. A further element, again, he probably added without the aid of extraneous suggestion, and thus clothed an old world anew in the associations habitual to his generation.

5. SOCIAL LIFE

I met a hundred men on the road to Delhi, and they were all my brothers. *Punjab proverb.*

Everything that Plautus has incorporated into his plays from the everyday life of Rome has a particular value in the reckoning of his originality, for this is an element which is likely to be more subtle and spontaneous than any other, and therefore to possess a suggestiveness of its own. Every stage of man's life, as it was lived at Rome, from the cradle to the grave, is represented in scattered examples in these plays, and these Roman instances far outnumber the few social features which are characteristically Greek.

"At first the infant...." Juppiter, taking an opportune farewell of *Alcmena* before the return of *Amphitruo* from the wars, says to her, referring to the child about to be born to

them, *quod erit natum, tollito* (*Amph.* 501). This recalls the Roman custom of laying the new-born child at its father's feet, so that he could signify his intention of rearing it by taking it up from the ground; otherwise the infant was exposed. Juppiter here deposes his function to the mother, but in *Truc.* 399, *Phronesium* speaks as a mother intending to "raise" her child by her own choice, the father being absent and therefore unable to have a voice in the matter.

Pursuing the child's life to the *dies lustricus*, we find (*Truc.* 424) a remarkable Grecism in the phrase *quinto die*. The fifth day after the child was born was in Greece that appointed for it to receive its name, to the accompaniment of religious sacrifices. In Rome, according to Plutarch, this took place on the eighth day if the child were a girl, on the ninth if a boy.

With the *bullæ*, however, of *Rud.* 1171 and *Curc.* 612, we return to Roman customs. This was a kind of amulet, of gold if pecuniary circumstances permitted, otherwise of leather. It was in origin an imitation of an ornament worn by the old Etruscan kings, and it was hung round the child's neck to preserve it from the influence of magic (*fascinatio*). Every Roman child was thought to be threatened by all kinds of evils from the numberless divinities, vague, petty, and mostly terrible, which formed his divine environment. Ovid describes many old charms for keeping these beings from the cradles of children¹.

Concerning the Roman ceremony of marriage, the *Casina* is the most fruitful play for details. There we read (l. 86) of the auspices which had to accompany the ceremony, and of the bridegroom attired in white (*candidatus*, l. 446). Of

¹ *Fasti*, vi, 105 seq.

the bride's attire Plautus touches on only one detail, namely the binding of the hair into the *sex crines*, or six plaited locks, *matronarum modo* (*M. G.* 791, *Most.* 226). The importance of the dowry in the contract is illustrated by the dilemma of *Lesbonicus* (*Trin.* 689), who is oppressed by the apparent impossibility of giving his dowerless sister in marriage to his friend. Looking a little ahead, the still greater importance of the *dotata uxor*, when her position and influence have been strengthened by time, is commented on with feeling in *Most.* 703 *seq.* The wedding-supper (*cena*), which was usually prepared by the father of the bride, is in the *Aulularia* the province of the bridegroom, a fact which causes surprise to at least one character of the play, but is explained by the apparent poverty of the bride's family. Similar hospitality is offered by the bridegroom *Phaedromus* in *Curc.* 728, evidently for no reason except his own exuberant spirits. The *Casina* mentions the fluteplayers (l. 798) and the torchbearers (l. 118) who accompanied the marriage procession to the bridegroom's house, and (l. 815) introduces the famous lifting of the bride over the threshold (*sensim super attolle limen pedes, noua nupta*), which was either a reminiscence of the forcible wooings of old times, or an insurance against the bad omen which would occur if the bride were to stumble at the entrance to her new home. Such at least are the explanations offered by Plutarch in his *Aetia Romana*, and it is obvious that a Roman custom which thus elicited surprise and speculation from a Greek was foreign to the social habits by which that Greek was surrounded.

Plutarch again, in the same enquiries into the customs of the Romans, wonders why Roman husbands sent their

wives word in advance of their return to town from the country or from abroad. This remarkable act of courtesy and consideration occurs, be it observed, in the *Stichus* and the *Amphitruo*; but as it is not unknown to Greek manners (witness the return of *Heracles* to *Deianeira* in Sophocles) and to the amenities of modern society, we hesitate to draw any conclusion except that Plutarch in this matter has been somewhat more futile than usual.

The houses in Plautus are mostly built on an indifferent plan, though the Roman construction of the house of *Periplectomenus* is an important element in the *Miles Gloriosus*. Round the *impluvium* (l. 159) of this house, i.e. the opening in the roof of the *atrium*, the entrance for the rain from above (hence the name) and the exit for the smoke from below, revolves the main plot of the story, and as Greek houses never had *impluvia*, this must be a Roman house, albeit built at Ephesus. It would be interesting to know what element there was in the Greek original of the story, for which this highly important structure has been substituted. It occurs again *Amph.* 1108. The *vestibulum* and pleasant *ambulacrum*, which were a feature of many Roman houses, appear *Most.* 756, and remind one of Vergil's playful adaptation of it when he planned a habitation for his bees¹, whose institutions were to be such a splendid copy of all that was best in Rome,

palmaque vestibulum aut ingens oleaster inumbret.

Associated with the entrance to the house is the *atriensis*, a dignitary who is found several times in Plautus (e.g. *Ps.* 609), and had no exact Greek equivalent (he differed considerably from the *οἰκονόμος*).

¹ *Georgics*, IV. 20.

The raising of Roman houses to several storeys is referred to in *Amph.* 863, where Jupiter jocosely announces that he lives in an elevated attic (*in superiore cenaculo*). Such a modest abode was later commended by Juvenal as being immune from the raids of Nero's soldiers.

Finally, the parasite, in the fragment of the play called *Boeotia* (which is attributed to Plautus, though not included in Varro's list), speaks of the city being filled with sundials (*solaria*). These in Plautus' day would be something of a novelty, for according to Salmasius the first sundial in Rome appeared in 254 B.C., the year of Plautus' birth. The parasite is probably meant to be an elder contemporary of Plautus, for he remembers with loving regret the good old days when mealtimes were regulated by the call of appetite, and not by the artificial and unaccommodating means in vogue at a later day.

One feature of a Greek house occurs in a certain type of key, the *clavis Laconica* of *Most.* 404. It does not seem to have been adopted at Rome, but it is mentioned by Aristophanes (*Thesm.* 423) from whom we learn that it had several wards (*τρεις ἔχοντα γομφίους*).

In the matter of dress, the characters of Plautus are torn between Greek and Roman fashions. It is remarkable that the *toga* is nowhere specifically mentioned, though the phrase *qui uestitu et creta occultant sese* (*Aul.* 719) seems to refer to the popular method of "dry-cleaning" the *toga* with chalk. The other important constituent of male attire, the *tunica*, occurs very frequently (e.g. *M. G.* 688, *Aul.* 647). With regard to head-covering there is the *pilleus*, which was shared by the Romans with the Etruscans and Umbrians, appearing as the symbol of liberty (*Amph.* 462) and as the cap of a sailor (*Pers.* 155). The *petasus* was worn by genera-

tions of celebrities, both Greek and Roman, from Hermes to Augustus¹, and is not missing in Plautus (*Amph.* 143, *Ps.* 734). The *paenula*, or cloak, is often found (e.g. *Most.* 991). Women, as far as they are clad in Roman fashion, wear the *palla* (*Aul.* 168, *Men.* 426). A most interesting diatribe on the unnecessary intricacies of ladies' attire occurs *Epid.* 225, where *Epidicus* himself discourses with contumely on their square-bordered dresses (called *impluviata* from their supposed resemblance to the *impluvium*, a homely derivation paralleled by peg-top skirts, leg of mutton sleeves, and bell-bottomed trousers), their blue kerchiefs, their gold edgings, their grand mantillas, and the infinite variety of weavings in all their materials. This passage has already been considered from an historical point of view.

Of Greek dress, frequent mention is made of the *chlamys*, the broad woollen upper garment used especially for a military cloak (*Curc.* 611, *M. G.* 1423) but also worn by children (*Merc.* 912), and of the *pallium*, a mantle favoured particularly by Greek philosophers, and worn by Romans only when they resided among Greeks (*Epid.* 1, *Men.* 658).

In the scenes of Plautus where feasting occurs, the Roman audience must have felt thoroughly at home. The reprehensible practice (followed in a later generation by Juvenal's consul Marius) of beginning the evening meal betimes in the afternoon, is mentioned *Asin.* 826 (*de die potare*). The *triclinium* seems to figure largely at these revels. Thus *Epignomus* (*Stich.* 487) announces that he is having nine guests (the normal number for a Roman host) to dinner, and the parasite *Gelasimus* (l. 493) modestly assigns to himself the place of lowest honour. *Grumio* in the *Mostellaria*

¹ Suet. *Oct.* 82.

(l. 43) is equally humble in the allotment of places at table, but in the festivities which conclude the *Persa*, *Sagaristio* is bidden to take the highest place (*accumbere in summo*, l. 767). The couches at table in the *Stichus* are made of gold (like Julius Caesar's, according to Suetonius) and of ivory (like some recorded by Varro). Preliminary attentions on the part of the slaves, such as relieving the guests of their shoes (*Truc.* 367) and bringing water for their hands (*Pers.* 769) are also found. We get several glimpses into the drinking-bouts which crowned the Roman feast. In *Pers.* 821 the attendant is told to carry round the wine (in *Asin.* 891 he is specifically ordered to begin with the guest of highest honour), and *Toxilus* (l. 773) toasts his mistress with the set phrase *bene tibi*, handing her his cup (*ut amantem amanti decet*). It is interesting to learn from Cicero and other writers that the Romans rather prided themselves on drinking "in the Greek manner" (*more Graeco*); but the Greeks, at any rate of the best age, succeeded, by the intellectual trend of their conversation, and by the exclusion of women from their table, in preserving a function of more restraint and no less sociability than the orgies which were the prevailing fashion at Rome.

From drinking we pass to gambling, the *uetita legibus alea*, as Horace called it. There is an interesting reference to this ban (which was removed under the Empire), in *M. G.* 164, where *Periplectomenus* warns his slaves to keep an eye on the invaders of his house, lest, by playing dice (*tabi*, a pun on its meaning of "knuckle-bones") at table, they should trespass against the Roman law (*ne legi fraudem faciant aleariae*).

The tablets of wax, which were in common use at Rome for writing purposes, until they were superseded by the

introduction of papyrus, are mentioned *Ps.* 31, 401, *Bacch.* 441; in the last instance they appear as the defensive weapons with which the seven year old schoolboy warded off the irate approaches of his *paedagogus*. The *stili*, the pointed instruments by which the wax was inscribed, are referred to jocularly by *Pseudolus* (l. 545) who anticipates punishment in a metaphor of this sort, *stilis me totum usque ulmeis conscribito*.

Turning to the less strictly domestic side of Roman life, we observe the very large number of times in which mention is made of the term *patronus*, both in a technical sense and in the more general meaning of "kind and helpful friend" (e.g. *Rud.* 705, 906, *Cas.* 759, *Most.* 407, *Pers.* 838). The word *rex* meaning "patron" is found *Capt.* 92 and *Stich.* 445, and recurs in Juvenal¹ for the historic glutton who dined in solitary state off "the choicest dainties of land and sea." The most important passage in this respect is *Men.* 571-601, where the first *Menaechmus* laments the irresistible impulse which sets every man of wealth to collect as many "clients" as possible; whether they were good or bad, poor or well to do, it mattered nothing, so long as he had a larger retinue of dependents than had his neighbours; and he continually paid the price for his vanity by having to extricate his clients from the clutches of the lawcourt or the *comitia* when, by their excessive proclivity to perjury and usury, they found themselves in difficulties beyond their power to escape.

The parasite was a stock character in the New Comedy. He was a hanger-on with a view to being invited out to dinner. He was transferred to the Roman imitations of Greek comedy,

¹ *Optima silvarum interea pelagique vorabit*
Rex horum. *Sat.* I. 136.

but, as it is known that by the days of Horace the *edaces parasi* were prominent and well-established characters in the actual life of Rome, there is sufficient reason to suppose that Plautus saw around him plenty of real examples who would make copy for his ready pen. It is not necessary to assume, for instance, that *Ergasilus* of the *Captivi* was a mechanical reproduction of a Greek original; he is certainly a type, but a living type, and, as a Roman, he would consider his little Grecisms a deliberate polish and refinement natural to the high life to which he aspired. His delirium of energy when he is suddenly appointed *cellarius* for the arrangement of *Hegio's* banquet takes place in a thoroughly Roman kitchen.

A characteristic feature of Roman life is found in the *Stichus* (l. 195 *seq.*), where *Gelasimus* holds an auction (*auctio*), posing as his own auctioneer, and carrying out in detail all the little formalities proper to such an occasion. Plautus contains other references to this mode of sale, e.g. *Bacch.* 815 (*ut praeco praedicat*).

Another branch of finance, namely banking, is prominent in Plautus. *Argentarii*, who sound genuinely Roman, are mentioned (e.g. *Curc.* 377) but far more frequently the species are referred to as *tarpezitae* (e.g. *Trin.* 425, *Capt.* 193, *Epid.* 143), which was the technical name for them in Greece. The two terms appear to have been practically equivalent, and it is not impossible that the Greek may have been adopted into daily use at Rome. There is just the possibility of a curiously Roman detail attached to the *argentarii* of the *Curculio*, for there *Lyco* the banker signifies his intention of having recourse to the praetor in the event of his clients being difficult to deal with. A Roman banker was subject to the superintendence of the state authorities, and could

presumably look for their support on occasions of stress. In *Ps.* 287, and often elsewhere, the *danista*, or moneylender, has a distinctly Greek flavour.

In *Truc.* 136 the sentence *nimis otiosum te arbitror hominem esse* recalls, in its context, an interesting episode in the history of Roman social life, which is recorded in Livy XXI. 63. The historian tells of a law passed by a tribune and supported by C. Flaminius, forbidding senators as a class to engage in speculative ventures in foreign trade. They were allowed to transport the produce of their own estates, but not to enrich themselves by commercial dealings in the provinces or elsewhere, following the principle, *quaestus omnis patribus indecorus uisus*. The law was extremely unpopular with senators, and comment upon it extended even to the comic stage.

There are passing references to gladiatorial shows, which of course were not so prominent in Roman life of Plautus' day as they became under the Empire. Thus the *palus* (*Rud.* 1290) is the gladiator's sword of wood, and the phrase *in statu stat senex* (*M. G.* 1839) refers to the defensive attitude of the gladiator before the contest begins.

Among the few general reflections in these plays upon the state of contemporary society, none is more striking than *Megadorus'* discourse (*Trin.* 199) beginning *nihil est profecto stultius*. This passage tallies so remarkably with what we learn from St Paul and others of the character of Athens, that we must assign it to the original Greek play: but if the Roman audience observed the cap to fit elsewhere, Plautus doubtless would have been not discontent.

Coming at last to "the lean and slippered pantaloon," we are confronted with the melancholy subject of legacy-

hunting. The methods of this practically acknowledged profession are displayed at length and with great clearness by the aged *Periplectomenus* in *M. G.* 705 *seq.* All that Horace and Juvenal have to say of the Romans' feverish quest for the favour of their rich and childless old men, and of the way in which the victims traded on these attentions for their own advantage, is here corroborated in every detail, and we realise that Pliny was far from making an original discovery in his estimation of childlessness, *orbitas in auctoritate summa.*

Death is naturally not a large element in Plautine comedy, and references to its ceremonies are very scarce. *Truc.* 231 and *Bacch.* 884 alludes to the *naenia*, or Roman funeral song, and in the former play (l. 495) there is mentioned the *praefica*, or hired mourner, who recalls Statius' description of the function of the professional weepers, *qui non sua funera plorant.*

As every play of Plautus contains at least one slave in its cast, a picture of slave life necessarily fills a large part of the canvas, and it is interesting to see to what a great extent this is Roman rather than Greek. The play which is most important in this respect is the *Captivi*, in which no fewer than five characters are either temporarily or permanently in the position of slaves.

The treatment accorded to a Greek slave varied with the character and position of the owner, and with the qualities and value of the slave. The slave had no legal rights, but there were laws which protected him against excessive cruelty and caprice, and it was usually open to him, when he considered that his ill-treatment had gone far enough, to take refuge in a temple and claim to be sold to another

master. The Roman slave, in the eyes of the law, belonged absolutely to his master, who could torture or kill him, compel him to commit any moral or immoral action, and even cast him out in his old age after long years of service.

Thus in the *Captivi*, when we see *Stalagnus* at his final exit accepting his due of fetters with a grim "smallest contributions thankfully received," we conclude that his lot was cast in genuinely Roman places. *Tyndarus*, bound in chains and sent to work in the stone quarries, makes us pause on remembering that the Athenians at Syracuse suffered a similar fate, being, like *Tyndarus*, αἰχμάλωτοι, or prisoners of war. Nevertheless, such treatment was anything but alien to Roman ideas, and the innumerable details of Roman slave life scattered through the play, support the conclusion that the picture harmonised completely with the ordinary life of Rome.

Stalagnus is referred to as *Hegio's lepidum mancipium*, i.e. purchased slave, a phrase (minus the adjective) which occurs very frequently in Plautus (e.g. *M. G.* 23, *Pers.* 532, *Trin.* 421). The boy who complains in Act iv. of the ravages of *Ergasilus* in the kitchen, seems to have been a *uerna*, a slave born in the household, though this word is not actually used, as it is in *Amph.* 179. The *lorarii* who were set to scourge the delinquent slaves, were probably fellow-slaves of the victims. *Tyndarus* and his companion were bought, as we learn from the prologue, from the spoils of victory in the care of the quaestors. The traffic in slaves at Rome was recognised as rivalling the celebrated trade at Delos, and though *Ergasilus* (l. 98) refers to it indignantly as a *quaestus inhonestus*, we learn from Plutarch¹ that even the

¹ *Cato mai.* 21.

highly respectable Cato put money into these questionable transactions. Slaves were usually sold in public markets, and Seneca¹, corroborated by a suggestion in *Curc.* 481, reports that they were also sold near the temple of Castor.

To return to the *Captivi*. When *Aristophontes* (l. 574) asks Tyndarus, *quem patrem qui seruos est?* he recalls the melancholy fact that a slave had no parentage in the eyes of the Roman law. This imparts a tinge of humour to *Olympio's* boast (*Cas.* 418) that the success of his side in the drawing of the lots was due to his own *pietas* and to that of his ancestors. It also elucidates the sarcasm of *Charmides* (*Trin.* 1031) in attributing to his slave a *mos maiorum*.

Another important feature in the position of Roman slaves was the encouragement given them by their masters to save their own money—*peculium*, a store which was by every right their own. This is often mentioned in Plautus (e.g. *Asin.* 541, *Pers.* 192, *Trin.* 434), while from *Cas.* 258 it appears that a slave who had neglected his opportunities of collecting this was regarded as particularly lazy and contemptible.

The typical Roman law that the misdeeds of one slave should involve the punishment of all his fellows, is referred to in *M. G.* 408, where *Palaestrio* entreats his colleague *Sceledrus* not to invite such a catastrophe.

It is chiefly in these lower walks of life that we find the extraordinarily rich vocabulary of abuse and ill-will for which Plautus is so justly famous, and although the extant fragments of Menander prove that this was a feature familiar to the Greek tongue, the language of Plautus is too spontaneous and hearty to represent anything but the real Roman life of his day. *Uerbero* and *mastigia* are common

¹ *ad Seren.* 13. 4.

forms of address, and *furcifer*, a term as little endearing, is derived from the *furca*, a heavy forked piece of wood placed as a punishment on a slave's neck, his hands being tied to the two ends. The number of forms of punishment and torture mentioned in Plautus, and borne out by other Roman authors, is almost incredible; there are the *catenae singulariae*, or light fetters (*Capt.* 112); the *tunica molesta*, alluded to in the *pix atra* of *Capt.* 597, a horrible form of burning mentioned also by Martial and Juvenal; the *patibulum* (*M. G.* 360, *Most.* 56), or forked yoke, mentioned by Cato for its more merciful function of propping vines; the *columbar* (*Rud.* 888), a torturing collar, so called from its resemblance to a hole in a dove-cot; the *caruarium*, or meat-rack, diverted to more personal uses (*Ps.* 198); the *pistrinum*, or pounding-mill (*Bacch.* 781); *uirgae* (rods) and *stimulus* (the lash) mentioned very frequently; the red-hot plates (found also in Horace¹ and Cicero²), crosses, fetters, and many other afflictions enumerated in *Asin.* 548 *seq.*; and the practice of branding the word FUR (which is Roman) on the forehead of a thief, referred to in the phrase *trium litterarum homo* of *Aul.* 325.

We come now to the more cheerful theme of the manumission of slaves. To end a play by rewarding a faithful and heroic slave with freedom was the Plautine method of "living happily ever afterwards." The phrase *manu emittere* occurs times without number (e.g. *Capt.* 408, 713, *Rud.* 1218, 1388, *Asin.* 411, *Cas.* 284, *Most.* 975), and *adserere manu* somewhat less often (*Curc.* 708). The *vindicta* (*Curc.* 212) and *festuca* (*M. G.* 961), the staff with which the slave was touched in the ceremony of manumission, are both mentioned, and

¹ *Ep.* I. xv. 36.

² *in Verr.* v. 63. 163.

the fateful words of the master, *liber esto*, are found *Epid.* 730, *Men.* 1149; it is in allusion to this that *Sosia* at the end of the *Amphitruo* says to his lord (l. 857) *abeo si iubes*. In the same play there occurs the phrase *capere pilleum* (l. 462) meaning the felt cap which was given a slave at his enfranchisement as a sign of his freedom.

Nearly all the Plautine slaves are in character what we are accustomed to regard as Greek (*Tyndarus* of the *Captivi* is an exception who will be considered later). They have a distinct resemblance to their prototypes in Aristophanes and Menander. This would present no difficulty in the face of their Roman setting, but for the natural presumption that the *Graeculus esuriens* did not come to Rome in any great numbers until the middle of the second century B.C., so that it is questionable whether the Greek type of slave, versatile, daring, exuberant, and witty, was very familiar to the Rome of Plautus' day. There are however accommodating factors to be considered in this problem. Low life, all the world over, has a characteristic wit, and the Fescennine and other local types of humour prove that the Italian was not behindhand in this respect. Moreover, even if the Roman slave had not attached to him quite the romance and verve which formed the halo of the Plautine figure, the latter would make none the less appeal to the imagination of an audience containing a large proportion of plebeian holiday-makers. These in their moments of relaxation would be prepared to forget the stern ideals in which they had been educated by discreet overlords, and to accept a character somewhat alien to their own ideas with all the greater welcome for the thoroughly Roman detail of the setting in which he was placed. The Greek slave in Plautus

had not the slightest tendency to make the drama unnatural or ill-considered in the estimation of the audience for which it was intended. On the contrary, this slave contributed so much to the play in which he was placed, that he became in Rome as in Greece a popular necessity to the drama, like the pantaloon of mediaeval Venice; so much so, that when Plautus came to write his original burlesque, the *Amphitruo*, he had to insert two specimens, one (Mercury) very ludicrously, into an otherwise unexpected setting.

It is not only in Rome itself, but in the remote rural districts, far from the busy scenes of city life, that Plautus, the native of the northern uplands, finds himself at home, with ready inspiration for literal use and for metaphor alike. Homely proverbs and sayings of the countryside come easily to the lips of his characters, such as *sibi quisque ruri metit* (*Most.* 799) and *pollucta pago* ("dish for the village," *Rud.* 424). A picturesque metaphor from country life occurs in *Trin.* 317, where the dutiful son *Lysiteles* assures his father that he has always kept his commands "in good repair" (*sarta tecta*, a proverbial phrase, originally legal, connected with the censor's duties), and the old man, pursuing the homely image, tersely bids him see that the rain does not come through on this particular occasion. From similar associations we find the infuriated *Hegio* (*Capt.* 661) addressing *Tyndarus* as *sator sartorque scelerum et messor maxume*, "the consummate sower and hoer and reaper of mischief," and the irrepressible slave reminds him that he has omitted the harrow (*occator*) from his catalogue, forgetting that country folk always harrow before they hoe. Plautus further makes mention of *sculponeae* (*Cas.* 495), a rustic type of wooden

shoe, *clitellarii* [*muli*] (*Most.* 780), mules for carrying pack-saddles, both of which terms are found in Cato, a fact which is of itself surety for their genuine Italian origin.

Among the wild animals of Italian life, a certain interest is attached to the *lupus essuriens* of *Capt.* 912 and *Stich.* 605. Where the Roman talked of the wolf for fierceness and rapacity, the Greek preferred the lion. Thus the Platonic Socrates in the first book of the *Republic*, says οἷε γὰρ ἄν με οὕτω μανῆναι ὥστε ξυρεῖν ἐπιχειρεῖν λέοντα καὶ συκοφαντεῖν Θρασύμαχον; Vergil, however, in most of his similes, substituted the Italian wolf for the Homeric lion, and it is a curious fact established by numismatists that the farther west one travels, the more unfamiliar and astonishing are the delineations of lions on ancient coins. The fox, of course, is not peculiar to Italy, but the saying *tam facile uincens quam pimum uolpes comest* (*Most.* 559) has the ring of an Italian country proverb.

For birds we find the kite (*Rud.* 1124) and the vulture (*uolturio plus humani est, M. G.* 1044). The latter seems to have been a ready simile to the Roman mind; Cicero, for instance, referred to Verres as the *uolturius provinciae*.

This forms a kind of complement to what has already been said about the interest taken by the Romans of Plautus' day in Italy. It was only a rudimentary feeling, hardly comparable with the spell which the rivers and mountains and plains of Italy exercised on later minds such as Vergil or even Lucretius. It is better paralleled by the little touches like the "smale fowles" that "maken melodye," which brings parts of the *Canterbury Tales* under the magic of the English countryside, far removed from the France and Italy of their origin. The writers of the New Comedy are

represented by many fragmentary eulogies of country life, for instance, the following from Menander's *ὑδρία*—

ὡς ἡδὺ τῶ μισοῦντι τοὺς φαύλους τρόπους
ἐρημία, κ.τ.λ.

but they praise it almost exclusively for the peace and solitude which their imagination makes sympathetic with each sentimental mood of the moment. Their view is entirely romantic. Plautus' attitude is quite different, it is practical, natural, and real, and it reveals him as something more than an uninterested machine for converting the plays of the New Comedy into his own tongue.

Closely related to this consideration of the social aspect of Roman life, are Plautus' references to the theatre, on the practical as well as on the literary side. From the prologue to the *Amphitruo* we learn a good deal about the packing of audiences with paid applauders (*fauitores*) and the punishment of bad actors, but this may not be accounted to the credit of Plautus, as the references in the passage to seated spectators prove it to be post-Plautine. In the play itself the poet seems to have in mind two of his own dramas, when (l. 988 *seq.*) Mercury discourses on the functions of the breathless slave; the phrase *navem saluam nuntiat* may easily recall *Pinacium* of the *Stichus*, and *irati aduentum senis* is *Tranio's* tidings of the return of *Theopropides* in the *Mostellaria*. In *Bacch.* 214 he makes an interesting and presumably laudatory allusion to his *Epidicus*, thereby dating the latter play with fair certainty as previous to the former: and in *Cos.* 523 he may refer to his own play the *Colax* (now lost) or to that of Naevius, but in any case the reading of the text is doubtful.

In *Trin.* 858 there is a mention of the *choragus*, the Roman stage official who had charge of costumes and properties generally, and was thus distinct from the Greek of the same title. It is probably the same character who makes the remarkable speech already noticed in *Curc.* 462 *seq.* (assuming this passage, with all probability, to be genuine). In *M. G.* 631 the word *albicapillus* refers to the white wigs which it was the custom of actors impersonating old men to wear upon the comic stage.

Thus far the theatrical allusions may be reckoned original to Plautus; but the question has another side. In *Rud.* 86 he makes a somewhat grotesque allusion to the *Alcmena* of Euripides, using it as a simile for a tempestuous wind. After perusing the *Amphitruo* we conclude that this may be honest proof of personal acquaintance with the play. The reference alone, however, does not presuppose this, for *Menander* (*Epitr.* 585) alludes to and quotes from another play of Euripides, the *Auge*, and this suggests that the original *πήρα* of Diphilus may have referred to Euripides too. In *Most.* 1149 Plautus refers to Philemon and Diphilus in a way natural to a Greek rather than to a Roman, and hence probably translated from his original.

In considering this matter we must remember the numerous references found in Plautus to the characters of Greek legend and drama. They are most prominent perhaps in the *Menaechmi* (Calchas, the Titans, Ulysses, Nestor, Ganymede and Porthaon), and *Chrysalus'* lengthy account of the fall of Troy in *Bacch.* 900 *seq.* is another striking instance; most plays contain at least one or two such names, though they are curiously absent from the *Amphitruo*. As *Menander* too has the same characteristic (*Epitr.* 110, Pelias

and Neleus; *Sam.* 122, Helen, 245, Zeus and the shower of gold) we may assign the Plautine allusions whole-heartedly to the Greek original, but with this reservation, that in plays so essentially popular they must have been already to some extent naturalised to Roman thought in order to be accepted at all.

6. RELIGION

Nicht Rosen bloss, auch Dornen hat der Himmel.

Schiller.

If the religion of Plautus was acceptable to the people before which it appeared, and there are no grounds for believing otherwise, the picture which we have here of popular religious usages and beliefs of the second century B.C. is of great value. From its spontaneity, and the fact of its incorporation into the ordinary things of life, it teaches us more of Roman religion than the passionate disbeliefs of Lucretius or all the antiquarian learning of Varro. Polybius, who lived in this century and knew Rome well, said that it was the scrupulous fear of the gods which kept the Roman commonwealth together (*συνέχειν τὰ Ῥωμαίων πράγματα*), and this is true both of the official beliefs which controlled their general politics, and of the more personal creeds, springing from the thousand and one divinities which guided or misguided the life of the individual Roman. In the religion of the Plautine comedies we expect to find a blending of Greek and Roman, but the comparatively simple elimination of the exclusively Greek element shows pretty clearly what by way of religious doctrine the ordinary Roman, such as Plautus, had to live on in that day. We must remember the fact of comic license, and not treat Plautus more seriously than he treated

his own plays. With this reservation, the enquiry is profitable.

First we will enumerate certain Plautine deities who were the most prominently accepted in Roman worship, and have a counterpart in the pantheon of Greece. An almost complete catalogue of them is found in *Bacch.* 892-5—

*ita me Iuppiter, Iuno, Ceres,
Minerua, Lato, Spes, Opis, Uirtus, Uenus,
Castor, Polluces, Mars, Mercurius, Hercules,
Summanus, Sol, Saturnus, dique omnes ament.*

Most of these, with the addition of others, recur elsewhere: *Iuppiter* (most frequently, e.g. *Capt.* 426, 768, *M. G.* 331, 1082, this last passage refers to his origin as the son of *Ops*); *Iuno* (*Cas.* 408, and, as *materfamilias*, *Amph.* 831); *Mars* (*Bacch.* 847, *M. G.* 1384, *Truc.* 656: in this last passage he is associated with the wolf and thus with the old story of the founding of Rome); *Uenus* (*M. G.* 1384, *Men.* 371, *Ps.* 15; *Rud.* 694, where she has her favourite epithet *alma*); *Neptunus* (*Trin.* 820, *Stich.* 403, where he is the colleague of the deified storms); *Liber* (*Capt.* 578, *Cas.* 640, *Curc.* 98, 114); *Uolcanus* (*Amph.* 341, *Bacch.* 255); *Apollo* (*Aul.* 394, where he appears in his rather typically Greek character of ἀλεξίκακος, though the institution of the *ludi Apollinares* in the crisis of the second Punic war [212 B.C.] probably rendered this aspect of him familiar at Rome); *Mercurius* (*St.* 274); *Aesculapius* (*Curc.*); *Bellona* (*Bacch.* 847); *Lucina* (*Truc.* 476); *Nerio* (the wife of Mars; a Sabine word, like *Nero*, signifying bravery; *Truc.* 515); *Lauerna* (goddess of thieves, *Aul.* 445, frag. of the *Cornicula*); *Siluanus* (*Aul.* 674); and *Summanus* (the equivalent of Pluto, *Curc.* 412). In *Epid.* 610 a reference is made collectively to the

undecim deos plus Juppiter himself, i.e. the "twelve gods" enumerated by Ennius¹.

It is interesting to compare with this side of Roman religion the Menandrian theology in so far as the extant fragments allow it to be formulated. It includes Zeus, Heracles, Poseidon, Apollo, Aphrodite, Demeter, Athena, Dionysus, Asclepius, Hephaestus, and Adrasteia. Moreover, the "twelve gods" reappear in *οἱ δώδεκα θεοί* of *Sam.* 91, and seem to be identical with the similar company of *Arist. Birds*, 96. By the time of the New Comedy the Olympian hierarchy in Greece had fallen for ever from its old estate, and on the stage it seems to be little more than a literary survival. The gods are useful as ejaculations and expletives, and as the pivots of mythology, but they have no motive power in the evolution of a dramatic plot. Their counterparts in Plautus' world were on a rather different footing. Their splendour was still an object of worship, their caprice a cause for fear: but in Plautus as in Menander they are totally free from responsibility for the course of mortal affairs. *Mars* is the patron of *Pyrgopolinices* on the battlefield, but he does nothing to protect him from the assaults of his enemies in the jousts of love. *Venus*, again, from her imminent temple, surveys all the actual intricacies and possible catastrophes which make up the plot of the *Rudens*: but though her priestess administers material consolation to the shipwrecked heroines, the goddess herself makes no effort to disentangle matters, nor, be it noted, is she once requested to do so.

In the *Amphitruo* the detached way in which all the

¹ *Iuno, Uesta, Ceres, Deiana, Minerva, Venus, Mars, Mercurius, Ioui, Neptunus, Volcanus, Apollo.*

characters regard the Olympian hierarchy, is especially amusing in view of the fact that among the persons of the drama are Juppiter and Mercury. Juppiter is a common ejaculation, falling even from his own lips, and Hercules, we observe, is copiously sworn by before he is born. But this play stands apart from the rest, and must not be taken as typical.

In trying therefore to sort out the Greek from the Roman in this matter, we may be content to leave this aspect of religion on common ground, and pursue our search for the Roman element in another direction.

The well-established personages already mentioned form only one section of the imposing array of divinities found in the pages of Plautus. It has been said that all deities that man can devise have a right in the pantheon of a polytheistic religion, and Plautus, perhaps to a degree more than his contemporaries, far more than Menander, as far as we can tell, takes full advantage of the fact; but this is a question of comic license as well as of theology.

The first of these supernumeraries is *Fortuna*. As *Τύχη* she appears in Menander; indeed, she was originally a product of the Hellenistic age, when, after the collapse of the orthodox religion, the need was felt for some more or less personal divinity who could be held responsible for the extraordinary phenomena of success and catastrophe which marked the post-Alexandrine period. She was, however, well established at Rome by the end of the third century. There were temples to *Fortuna Respiciens* on the Esquiline and the Palatine, and this aspect of the goddess is referred to in the play on words in *Capt.* 834. She is alluded to in passing as evil (*mala*) by the infuriated *Labrax* of *Rud.* 501,

and as good (*bona*) in *Aul.* 100, where the absurd wariness of the miser *Euclio* is displayed by his telling his maidservant that even if this beneficent deity comes to his door, she is, along with borrowing neighbours and other undesirables, to be refused admittance. *Pseudolus* in a single passage (679 *seq.*) attributes the success of his intrigues to the kindness of Fortune. In *Asin.* 716 *seq.* the infinite capabilities of a favouring Fortune are questioned by a despairing lover. She is referred to again in *Pers.* 515. In not one of these passages is Fortune referred to in any sense as the moving deity of the play. She is just a passing allusion, and events take their course without any reference to her pleasure or displeasure. This fact we may take as a simple inheritance from the New Comedy, which had discarded the problems of Aeschylus in the same way as Plautus omitted to anticipate Vergil.

We come now to the enormous array of minor deities, some common to Roman thought of the time, others coined by Plautus for a comic purpose, especially for the rapturous effusions of lovers to their ladies. The following are examples: *Salus* (*Capt.* 864, *Asin.* 713, *Bacch.* 879; in a non-comic rôle of representing the welfare of the Roman people, this deity had a temple on the Quirinal); *Saturitas* (*Capt.* 877, the appropriate god for a hungry parasite); *Lux*, *Laetitia*, *Gaudium* (*Capt.* 864); *Libertas* (*Rud.* 489); *Lubentia* (*Asin.* 268); *Pietas* (*Asin.* 506, *Bacch.* 1176, *Ps.* 280, *Cure.* 471); *Amor*, *Uoluptas*, *Uenustas* (*Bacch.* 115); *Luna*, *Sol*, *Dies* (*Bacch.* 255); *Munditia* (*Cas.* 225); *Ignavia* (*Ps.* 850); *Opportunitas* (*Ps.* 669); *Spes* (*Ps.* 709); *Honor* (*Trin.* 663); *Fides* (*Aul.* 583); *Salubritas* (frag. of the *Cornicula*); and *Iocus*, *Ludus*, *Sermo*, *Suavisuauiatio* (*Bacch.* 116). The

pseudo-deification of such qualities is largely Roman, even largely Plautine. Such elasticity of ideas in the matter, especially for humorous purposes, was never equalled, as far as we know, on the other side of the Adriatic, and Terence is practically untouched by it. One point must be noticed in this connection: the prologue to the *Trinummus* is spoken by *Luxuria* and *Inopia*, and is thus paralleled by the prologue to Menander's *Perikeiromene*, which is spoken by the goddess "Αγνοια.

A particularly Roman thought in the Plautine theology is that of the *Genius*. This was, as Servius explains, "the natural god of each individual thing or place or man," and it becomes perhaps best known in Roman history when the *Genius* of Augustus comes to be worshipped all over the Roman Empire. The general idea is not limited to Italy. It is also Oriental, and recurs, for instance, in the "fravashi" of Persia. But this name, with its definite conception, is quite Roman, and there does not seem to have been anything quite like it in Greece. In Plautus it occurs most frequently in the *Captivi*. Thus *Philocrates* describes to *Hegio* how his fellow-captive's supposed father sacrificed to his *Genius* with vessels of the cheapest earthenware, lest the god should be tempted to lower his dignity by theft of more expensive articles (l. 290). In l. 879 *Ergasilus* speaks of *Hegio's* son as his own *Genius*, thus putting him into the most sacred and endearing relation with himself (as *Curculio* does *Phaedromus*, *Curc.* 301), and in l. 977 *Hegio*, desperately anxious for *Philocrates* to come out of the house, entreats him by his *Genius*, as being perhaps the most precious thing he could bring to bear on the subject. Similarly *Phaedromus* (*Curc.* 628) swears that he will rescue his

mistress *Planesium* as he would his own *Genius*, i.e. practically his own soul. Other references to the *Genius* are *Men.* 138, *St.* 622, *Aul.* 725.

Closely associated with this, to the mind of a Roman, were the *Lares*, and these too figure in Plautus. They were perhaps the spirits of ancestors, and dwelt in every household, little twin guardian gods, with a dog at their feet. They were almost indistinguishable from the *Penates*, and their special function was to see that the family did not die out. This was almost the only part of Roman religion which never became obscured by Oriental cults. The prologue to the *Aulularia* is spoken by the *Lar* of the household of Euclio, and in this connection we may note that the prologue to Menander's Ἡρώς Θεός is spoken by the minor deity of that name, who may have been somewhat akin to the *Lar* but was certainly not identical with him. There is a curious reference to the Roman god in the *Mercator*, a play otherwise uncoloured by Roman features. In l. 834 *Charinus* addresses the

di penates meum parentum, familiai Lar pater

in farewell, saying that he will leave his unsatisfying ancestral home and find for himself another *Lar* and other *Penates*. It is doubtful whether a Roman, mindful of the founder of the Roman state, could thus lightly have abandoned the guardians of his house and taken to himself others. (*Palaestrio* [*M. G.* 1339] in bidding farewell to his *Lar familiaris*, seems to entertain no such hope.) This seems to be a rough approximation of something different in the Greek. Later (l. 865) *Charinus* invokes the *Lares Uiales* to be propitious to his journey. The Romans frequently had shrines to *Lares* at cross-roads. Ovid¹, in fact, tells that in the time of Augustus the city of

¹ *Fasti*, v. 145.

Rome alone had a thousand. Other references to the *Lar* are *Trin.* 39, *Rud.* 1207.

Other specifically Roman spirits mentioned in Plautus are the *larvae*, ghosts, the souls of the dead who, by reason of a violent or unjust death, could find no rest. They usually assumed the form of spectres or skeletons, and made a hobby of striking the living with madness. It is thus that *Tyndarus* is pleased to account for the "delirium" of *Aristophontes* (*larvae stimulant virum*, *Capt.* 598), and the same compliment is paid to *Euclio* in *Aul.* 642.

Apart from this superstition, the characters of Plautus regard the prospect of death and the unknown hereafter with a composure which is good-humoured where it is not actually comic. They appear to have an almost geographical conception of a region called *Acheruns*, which is to be the place of their considerable activities after their decease; thus it is to be the scene of the posthumous renown of *Tyndarus* (*Capt.* 689). In *Cas.* 448, to "send a man to *Acheruns*" means to kill him, and in *Poen.* 71, to go there oneself means to die; and twice (*Merc.* 290, *M. G.* 627) a man, as we should say, with one foot in the grave, is called a *senex Acherunticus*. It is edifying to note that *Acheron* is used to denote the future life by Ennius, and that Cicero in his *Tusculans* quotes the sentence *adsum atque advenio Acherunte* as coming from an old Roman poet whose name he omits. Just as all this may be accounted Roman, so may the personality who appears to be in charge of this not necessarily dismal region. *Orcus* was recognised by Ennius (*Acherunsia templa alta Orci*). In Plautus it was *Orcus* who refused to admit to his domain the elderly and inefficient cook hired by *Ballio* (*Ps.* 795), and it is only in the presence of *Orcus*

(*apud Orcum*) that *Argyrippus*, at one stage of his love-affair, has any hope of seeing again his beloved *Philaenium* (*Asin.* 606). *Orcus* may have had kinship with the Greek Pluto, but at least his name was new, and his recognition at Rome took place at a very early date.

The attitude of Plautine characters towards the gods, as far as it is expressed in general terms, is partly that of appreciation, partly that of speculation how to get most out of the gods on the cheapest terms. Both aspects are characteristically Roman. Thus in the *Captivi*, *Tyndarus* (l. 313) postulates a perfectly just deity who interests himself in the affairs of men, and *Hegio* (l. 324) attributes his own satisfactory wealth to the kindness of the gods as well as to the discreet behaviour of his ancestors. One of the most remarkable Roman traits in the *Rudens* is the emphasis on the virtue of *pietas* (e.g. *Palaestra* in l. 192, *si erga parentem aut deos me impiavi*, cf. ll. 26, 618). The value of this quality was an idea to which the Romans clung with an ever-increasing tenacity. Naevius and Ennius praised it. Later, the suggestion that it was the corner-stone of the Empire, was made, for instance, by Vergil and Horace, and this was a "heathen" notion which had to be combated even by such late writers as Tertullian and Prudentius.

On the other hand we must remember that *Periplectomenus* (*M.G.* 675, if we may cling to a suspected text) was confident that any amount of money spent on service to the gods balanced in his favour, and similarly *Philolaches* (*Most.* 241) described such an outlay as the best possible investment for any man's money.

There are few references in these plays to sacred festivals. The *Cereris Vigiliae*, which played an important part in the

story preceding the action of the *Aulularia* (ll. 36, 795) demand attention. The cult of Ceres was introduced into Rome in 496 B.C., and festivals were held in her honour every April and August. But they were naturally the direct counterpart of the Greek *Θεσμοφόρια*, and were accompanied by similar licenses and abuses. So here again we tread on ground common to Greece and Rome, only, in the context, it is perhaps more Greek than Roman. The *Dionysia* of *Cist.* 89 were replaced in Rome by the *Bacchanalia*; here we can but note the fact that Plautus has ignored an obvious opportunity for Romanisation. The *Ludi Olympii*, too, of *Stich.* 306, are Greek.

In the matter of Roman sacrificial ceremonies there is to be observed the sacrifice to the *Genius* already mentioned (*Capt.* 861) and *Amphitruo's* sacrifice after his triumphant return home from the wars (*Amph.* 946). In *Epid.* 146 there occurs the interesting word *succidaneum*, which is explained by Servius in a note on *Aeneid* II. 140 as the technical term used at Rome for the second victim at a sacrifice, if his predecessor had by some mischance irretrievably eluded the hand of the priest. Note too the phrase *inter sacrum saxumque sto* (*Capt.* 617, *Cas.* 970), a proverb for a perilous situation, like that of an animal for sacrifice, between the altar and the flint knife of the priest.

Perhaps the most typical and striking feature of Roman religion as portrayed in Plautus is the incessant reference to auspices and omens. The most important play in this respect is the *Casina*, by reason of the long scene (II. 6), in which the rival lovers draw lots for the favour of *Casina* herself. It is true that the title of the Greek original of this play—*κληρούμενοι*—suggests that Diphilus too had intro-

duced lots of some kind into his story; yet the Plautine details, the jar of water, the lots of fir and poplar wood, and the intense care taken by both parties for the avoidance of bad omens, tally so singularly with what Cicero tells of Roman divination, that the scene seems to have been re-dressed with considerable thoroughness by our Roman poet. It displays to advantage the extraordinary importance which the Romans attached to the unknown and uncontrollable powers whom they considered masters of their fate, and their incessant anxiety to avoid offending, by word or deed, the capricious something which might work so much harm. Livy¹ says that it was Numa who implanted in his people this scrupulous reverence for portents and omens. If this be so, Numa did his work well. Even Livy himself was not immune from some misgivings on the subject, and it may be guessed what enormous strength this superstition possessed two hundred years earlier when Plautus wrote for the people of Rome. The feeling is scattered broadcast through his plays. It appears in the common propitiatory ejaculations of the people, *quae res bene uortat* (*Capt.* 361), *quod di bene uortant* (*Aul.* 175), *bene dicite* (*Asin.* 745), in the angry fear aroused in one person by a careless ill omen on the part of another (*Amph.* 722), in the advantage attached to a crow engaged in converse on one's left (*Aul.* 624), and in many other instances (e.g. *Rud.* 336, *Bacch.* 1141, *Most.* 464). Auspices, too, the more official side of the same matter, are prominent in Plautus. Thus *Alcmena* supposes that unfavourable auspices have prevented *Amphitruo* from joining his legions, and in her irritated and suspicious mood she seems to regard the matter exactly as the cold and compli-

¹ L. 19.

cated science which was beginning to rule the world of Roman politics. In *Capt.* 766 *Aristophontes*, moved to slang, holds auspices responsible for his exit from and return to captivity. Other and minor references to the Roman habit of divination are *Amph.* 1132, *Asin.* 263, 374, *Epid.* 183, *Pers.* 607, *Ps.* 762. It is probable that no Greek writer would have emphasised this matter in the way that Plautus does.

The last word on this subject concerns philosophy. In general, Plautine characters repudiate any bent in that direction, e.g. *Pseudolus* (l. 687) *iam satis est philosophatum*, and *Acanthio* (*Merc.* 147) *philosophari numquam didici neque scio*. Mention must, however, be made of *Tyndarus* (*Captivi*) who takes a more serious view of life than the ordinary Greek slave, a fact not to be accounted for solely by his superior origin. His speech beginning (l. 741),

post mortem in morte nihil est quod metuum mali,

is a piece of Lucretianism appearing long before its time. Plautus, in reading many plays of the New Comedy, must have become familiar with the philosophies which succeeded the fall of the Olympian hierarchy in Greece and found their way at a later period to Rome. Thus *Tyndarus* ejaculates in the name of Juppiter and Hercules, but at the base of his *Credo* lies the old Epicurean tetractys—

ἄφοβον ὁ θεός,
ἀναίσθητον ὁ θάνατος.
τὸ ἀγαθὸν εὐκτῆτον,
τὸ δεινὸν εὐεκαρτέρητον.

The reference to the Cynics in the middle of the revelry which ends the *Stichus* (l. 704) is entirely comic, but the force of it would appeal to a Greek rather than to a Roman audience.

7. MONEY, ETC.

Monies is your suit.

Shakespeare.

The common statement that Plautine characters deal exclusively in Greek money does not obviate the propriety of enquiring a little further into this matter. It is true that Greek coinage—drachmas, minas, talents, and Philippics—predominates in all the plays; but there is at least one sum of money, the *nummi sescenti* referred to several times in the *Persa*, which is quite undoubtedly meant to be taken in Roman terms. Otherwise the word *nummus*, used frequently in the plays, seems to mean just “coin,” though we have the authority of Lewis and Short for regarding it as a definite sum in *Men.* 219. The *trinummus*, which is the title of a play, appears in that play as the coin given to the sycophant as a reward for his services. It sounds Roman enough, but seems to be without parallel. (The Greek title to the original play—Θησαυρός—offers no equivalent.)

The *as* appears once in a pun, and the *terruncius* (the quarter *as*) in the colloquial phrase *non terrunci facere*, “not to care a button,” appears *Capt.* 477. The *libella* (strictly the same as an *as*) is similarly used *Capt.* 947, *Ps.* 629.

Roman weights and measures may be conveniently considered under this heading.

The following instances occur:

libra, the Roman pound of twelve ounces, *Ps.* 816.

quadrilibris [*aula*], a jar weighing four pounds, *Aul.* 809.

centumpondium, a weight of a hundred pounds (recognised as Roman on the authority of Cato), *Asin.* 303.

amphora (*M. G.* 824), about six gallons, and thus equivalent to the *quadrantal* of *Curc.* 110.

congius, about six pints, in the phrase *con-*
gialis fidelia of *Aul.* 622.

Liquid
Measure.

hemina, half a pint (used also by Cato), *M. G.* 831. (The Greek *metreta*, or nine gallons, occurs *Merc.* 75.)

modius, a peck, a Roman corn measure, *St.* 253, *Capt.* 916.

The Greek *medimnus*, which was equivalent to six *modii*, occurs quite frequently in Plautus.

Dry
Measure.

pes, a foot, as a measure of length, *Asin.* 603, *Bacch.* 550, *Trin.* 903, *Curc.* 441.

Long
Measure.

8. UNCLASSIFIED EXAMPLES

Many ventures make a full freight.

Proverb.

The following points cannot be classified under any of the above headings, but are worthy of notice.

In the fourth act of the *Trinummus*, the sycophant, having forgotten the name of *Charmides*, the man he professes to come from, tries to recall it with the help of the unrecognised *Charmides* himself. He assists with the preliminary fact that the name begins with C, and *Charmides* makes the following suggestions: *Callias*, *Callippus*, *Callidemides*, *Callinicus*, *Callimarchus*, *Chares*, *Charmides*. Now in Greek the last two begin with χ , and the rest with κ ; only in Latin have they all a common initial, and this disposes us to believe that the passage at least in part is Plautine, not Greek, in origin.

In *Ps.* 1302, *Simo* gives an estimate of the amount of wine *Pseudolus* can drink in an hour, and the slave retorts,

“Nay, in a winter’s hour” (*hiberna hora*). This was according to Roman reckoning, by which the short days of winter were divided into the same number of hours as the long days of summer, so that winter hours were of shorter duration.

In *Amph.* 275, there is a small matter of astronomy. The constellations usually known by their Greek names, Orion, Hesperus, and the Pleiades, are called by their thoroughly Roman titles *Iugulae*, *Uesperugo*, and *Uergiliae*, which are recognised by Festus, though they do not seem to have been adopted into literary Latin.

9. LANGUAGE

Language most shows a man: speak that I may see thee.

Ben Jonson.

Aelius Stilo, in a famous epigram, said that if the Muses spoke Latin they would choose to speak in the language of Plautus. At first this may seem a little puzzling, but it really shows admirable judgment on the part of the ancient critic, for although the ordinary language of Plautus is hardly consonant with our idea of poetry, yet it is one of the most marvellous linguistic monuments in the whole of Latin literature. Plautus was a past-master in the art of words, a born creator, matchless and inexhaustible. His wonderful imagination and his infinitely quick and delicate sensibilities worked a kind of magic with the ordinary language of the day. As he is the sole extant representative of his type (for Terence seems cold and ordinary beside him), we cannot say whether he stood alone in this respect among his countrymen, or whether he typifies a people, unlettered indeed, but gifted with the rarest versatility and picturesque-

ness of expression. At any rate, this aspect of his work must needs be considered in estimating his originality. Its treatment here is necessarily very inadequate; we can only try to give the broadest idea of his unique genius. His pearls of expression defy criticism as they do apt translation. We can do little more than quote—and marvel.

To Plautus the world was not divided into labelled and pigeon-holed sections. By him, thoughts of the wildest opposites could be welded together in glorious confusion, and hence comes his infinite power of metaphor. Examples are: *calceatis dentibus* (with boots on one's teeth, *Capt.* 187), *uetustate uinum edentulum* (wine toothless with age, *Poen.* 700), *odos demissis pedibus in caelum uolat* (the savour flies to heaven with down-hanging feet, *Ps.* 841), *ulmea uirgidemia* (a crop of elm-cudgels, *Rud.* 636), *monumentis bubulis* (with reminders of bull's hide, *Stich.* 63), *oculatae manus* (hands that have eyes, *Asin.* 202). All his metaphors are taken quite lightly from the ordinary things of life around him, and there is something in them of the whimsicality of Edward Lear.

He comes nearest to poetry in the *Rudens*, where his language is inseparable from the romantic atmosphere of the whole story. It is particularly *Gripus*, the strange old man from "the fishy briny places," whom he endows with a picturesqueness of expression beyond almost any other of his characters.

He can invent magnificent words to fit any meaning—*dentifrangibula*, a tooth-breaker (*Bacch.* 596), *ueriuerbium*, truehood (*Capt.* 568). He works miracles of fun with superlatives—*occissumus*, ever so dead (*Cas.* 694), *patruissime!* my super-uncle! (*Poen.* 1197), *ipsissumus*, myselfself (*Trin.*

988). He can conjugate anything, be it verb or not—*charmīdatus es*, you've been Charmidised—*rursum te decharmīda*, now un-Charmidise yourself again (*Trin.* 977). Equally wonderful is he as a wizard in diminutives; even Catullus, with his ingenuity fired by tenderness and passion, and his intellect aided by the additional hundred years of literary activity behind him, failed to outdo him here. Examples are countless. The line (*Ps.* 68) *papillarum horridularum oppressiunculae* is typical, and so is the Lilliput of natural history in *Asin.* 666, *passerculum, agnellum*, etc.

Plautus displays no less facility in the matter of puns. There is one pun in the extant fragments of Menander, but anyone who has approached the unprofitable pastime of translating Plautine puns into English, will be ready to believe that Plautus, brimming over as he was with witty sparkles, invented his own puns, which is much quicker and easier, at his own pleasure, instead of trying to immortalise the dreary witticisms of an earlier age. His puns, good, bad, and indifferent, are simply beyond counting. Of all the plays, perhaps the *Bacchides* is the most afflicted in this respect, but none is entirely free from it. Some puns are on proper names—*Sosia* and *socius* (*Amph.* 383), *damnum in Epidamno* ("less at Leicester," *Men.* 264), *Persa me pessum dedit* ("the Injun has injured me," *Pers.* 740); some are merely common—*arcam* and *arcem* (*Bacch.* 943), *palla pallorem incutit* (*Men.* 610), *inuitus* and *inuitat* (*Trin.* 27); some are plays on single words—*inuocatus* in the senses of "uninvited" and "invoked" (*Capt.* 70); and *hunc ad te diripiundum adducimus* (*Poen.* 646), we bring him, either to tear you to pieces, or to you to tear to pieces, in Latin a delicate ambiguity of which the English is incapable.

In this connection must be considered the Carthaginian passage in the *Poenulus*. It has always been a crux, and is likely always to remain so. The innumerable interpretations of it, all contradictory and subversive of one another, by long generations of scholars, fill us with the sanguine suspicion that once it really had a specific meaning. Beyond this, we can but echo the indisputable statement of Bochartus—in *iis explicandis multi hactenus frustra sudarunt*.

Failing any evidence to the contrary, we will assume that at least one of the alternative versions of *Hanno's* introductory speech (ll. 930–939, or 940–949) was written by Plautus. The point that chiefly concerns us here is that in the following scene all *Milphio's* misinterpretations by word-sounds of *Hanno's* “Carthaginian” are done into genuine Latin, and cannot be derived, anyhow directly, from a Greek original. Thus *Hanno's* effusion *lechla-chananili-minichot* conveys to his bewildered interpreter only the Latin words *lingulas, canales, nuces*; *palumergadetha* becomes *palas* and *mergas*, and so on. All this, then, Plautus evolved from his own brain, realising that such a linguistic feat was sure of a warm reception. It is almost comparable with Shakespeare's scene, in which Henry V learns French by the most direct method, only the Plautine humour lacks that delicate flavour of romance.

As if to corroborate our confidence in Plautus' knowledge of Carthaginian, there is extant a fragment of one of his lost plays, the *Caecus*, which contains a Carthaginian word. This unadorned but suggestive treasure runs thus, *A: Quis tu es qui ducis me? B: Mu. A: Perii hercle! Afer est.*

Alliteration, assonance, and asyndeton in Plautus have been so frequently brought before the public notice that

they need not be treated here at length. They abound in every play. The passage *Cist.* 206 *seq.* is worthy of attention for its excessive asyndeton, as denoting the emotions of an agitated lover. The chief point to notice is that these features are characteristic of Latin writings and entirely absent from Greek. It is in fact impossible to feel that Plautus' native literary style was in any way influenced by the works he was translating.

Connected with his language, a great problem arises in the considerable amount of Greek scattered through his plays. Syntactically and idiomatically he is not affected by it, but in his vocabulary this feature is remarkable. According to our received text, some of it is in Greek script, while some has been transliterated, but this of course is no criterion of what Plautus himself wrote. In a few instances the Greek runs to whole sentences, e.g. *Stich.* 707, ἡ πέντ' ἡ τρία πῖν' ἡ μὴ τέτταρα, and *Cas.* 728, πράγματά μοι παρέχεις. In the majority of cases, however, the Greek consists of single words which have been naturalised to the extent of having Latin inflexions; nouns—*zamiā* (*Aul.* 197); *prothymiae* (*Stich.* 634); verbs,—*harpagavit* (*Ps.* 139, *Aul.* 201), *paratragoedat* (*Ps.* 707), *malacissandus* (*Bacch.* 73); and adverbs—*euge*, *euscheme hercle astitit et dulice et comoedice* (*M. G.* 213), *basilice agito eleutheria* (*Pers.* 29). Sometimes Plautus taxes his hearers' proficiency in Greek by making Latin puns on Greek proper names, e.g. *Lycus* and *lupus* (*Poen.* 776), *Gelasimus* and *ridiculus* (*Stich.* 174).

This list is by no means exhaustive, and at first sight it is surprising that so much Greek should be found in plays written primarily for an unlettered and untravelled people, and apparently very well received by them. It is safe to

assume that the audiences would never have approved plays which they considered stilted or spoilt by a learning beyond their ken. Although communication between the Roman and Greek worlds was by that time in a comparatively early stage, a considerable amount of Greek must already have been adopted into the Latin tongue. It is significant that Plautus, originally a rough countryman whose very name was thorough-going Umbrian, should have been such a supreme master in the understanding of Greek. It is this "dunkle Mittelgebiet," as Leo calls it, between Greek and Roman, both in language and in matter, which makes it so impossible to define exactly where the gift of the New Comedy ends and the originality of Plautus begins. In any case, it is quite unthinkable that these stray bits of Greek were stopgaps because Plautus was unable to think of the Latin for them! In these plays they come chiefly from the lips of slaves (e.g. *Stichus* and *Stasimus*), and probably at that time they were an innovation of speech which had not reached the more exalted circles of society.

The names of Plautus' characters are, with the exception of *Hanno*, Greek. But his soldiers are not the plain *Polemo's* and *Thraso's* of the New Comedy. Many names like *Pyrgopolinices* and *Antamoenides* carry us back to the Old Comedy, where impressive compounds such as *Δικαιόπολις* and *Φειδιππίδης* are frequent. Plautus' reversion to the older method was probably for comic effect, but it is interesting to note that his enterprise occasionally went a little too far, and led him to make what Aristophanes would have regarded as etymologically false formations.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION: "THE HACK'S PROGRESS."

Our evidence, not exhaustive, but at least fair and representative, is before us. To what conclusion does it lead?

The first point to notice is that a considerable original element in Plautus certainly exists.

The second point is that it is stronger in some plays than in others.

The third point, which requires a little elucidation, is that as far as it is possible to date the plays, the original element appears to be stronger in the later plays, and comparatively lacking in the earlier. It is, in fact, possible to trace, with a reasonable amount of probability, the development of Plautus' methods as a playwright, and the effect of his gradually changing views upon his work.

He seems to have begun to write comedies before the end of the second Punic war, and, as we have already seen, he probably first produced plays which were tolerably literal—and dull—translations of the original Greek. Fairly probable examples of these early works are the *Mercator* and the *Cistellaria*. The latter is indeed more or less dated by the reference, at the end of the prologue-like speech of *Auxilium*, to the still unfinished war with Carthage—

*parite laudem et lauream*¹,
ut uobis uicti Poeni poenas sufferant.

¹ This jingle is curiously echoed more than a century later in Cicero's celebrated patriotic fragment

cedant arma togae, concedat laurea laudi.

The closing pun, and the appropriateness of the sentiment to a definite period, make it certain that this passage, even if not the whole speech, was an original composition of Plautus. Beyond this, the play seems to owe little to the hand of the Roman poet, and we have already seen (chap. II) that one or two of its minor features are essentially Greek.

These two plays may thus be taken as specimens of Plautus' 'prentice-work. It appears, however, that after a few trials he grew more enterprising, and began to impart new life to his comedies by personal touches adapted to the requirements and humours of his public. To this still early and somewhat progressive period may be assigned three plays. The *Asinaria* is slightly Romanised, but has no particularly interesting feature to redeem its general sordidness. The *Mostellaria* is the excellent story of an old man who, returning home after a long absence abroad, is told by his slave *Tranio* that his house is haunted, and is thus nearly prevented from discovering that it really conceals the untimely revels of his son with a merry company of friends. Plautus has done full justice to the many possibilities of this theme, and the old story lives again with unabated vigour. It is the military and legal flights of *Tranio's* fancy that contain the most noticeably Roman elements. The *Menaechmi* is another good story vigorously revived. Something of the effect produced by this we can guess for ourselves, for Shakespeare, in his farce the *Comedy of Errors*, has taken this same ancient plot, and reproduced it in an even less completely revised setting. If the citizen of Ephesus would have stared, as he undoubtedly would, at Plautus' nonchalant references to *aediles*, *patroni*, and the like, he would have been no less surprised when introduced

by Shakespeare to such personages as Pinch, the schoolmaster, and Aemilia, the abbess, and by the attribution to himself of such advanced sentiments as, "Oh, for my beads, I cross me for a sinner." It may be noticed that as far as vividness of representation is concerned, Plautus does not suffer by comparison with the great master who at this one point joins hands with him across a great gulf of time and thought.

Just before the turn of the century may be placed Plautus' chief efforts at *contaminatio*, already discussed. Part of the *Miles Gloriosus*, as we have seen, was probably written earlier, but it is such a patchwork that the history of its composition can hardly be reconstructed now. Its production in its present lively form was probably later than that of the *Poenulus*, which marks the end of the war, and earlier than that of the *Stichus*, which is too dull to invite any particular date, from internal evidence, but is placed by Varro at 200 B.C. The scenes of revelry belowstairs, with which it closes, have been reproduced by Plautus in Roman guise, and are marked by a vivacity of which the rest of the play is hardly worthy.

The following decade of peace and of growing settlement and comfort at Rome, was productive of a number of good plays, which demonstrate an ever-increasing power and originality on the part of the author. The *Epidicus*, certainly, does not belong to his best work; its failure on the stage may not be due exclusively to the bad actor who is mentioned in the *Bacchides* as having spoilt it. We have already dated it about the time of the repeal of the *lex Oppia* in 195, and critics have found in the third act of the *Aulularia* a reference to the same event. Although Plautus was not responsible for the original conception of the miser *Euclio*,

this unforgettable personage has lost not a jot in his appearance in Roman comedy. Every detail of this extraordinarily harsh and morbid character is reproduced by Plautus largely in Roman colours, and with a truthfulness which even his imitator Molière failed to surpass. The *Rudens*, which probably belongs to this period, we have already seen to be a masterpiece from the point of view of language and general atmosphere. To compare it with Shakespeare's *Tempest* is perhaps hardly just, nor as illuminating as some critics have thought; yet Plautus' workmanship is able to bear even this severe test. The *Persa* probably owes to its original creator an ordinary plot and dull execution, and to Plautus the enlivening gift of a goodly number of puns and more stirring scenes of Roman feasting. The *Curculio* has been definitely dated 193, by its reference to the *lex Sempronia* and its connection with the worship of Aesculapius. Into this play Plautus has introduced an unadulterated Roman element in the speech of the *choragus*, which has already been noticed for its numerous allusions to the topography of Rome. In details, too, he has gone farther in the process of Romanisation than in any of the preceding plays. The *Pseudolus*, the favourite of Plautus and of many critics, belongs to the year 191. This too has been seen to contain a great number of Roman details. It is further remarkable for its language, which, besides containing a certain number of Greek words, especially in the speeches of *Pseudolus* himself, is marked by an originality and picturesqueness of expression, especially in a wide vocabulary of endearment and abuse, which was now reaching its full development in Plautus, and becoming the hall-mark of his work. The *Trinummus* is fairly Roman but not particularly striking.

From internal evidence, as we have seen, it may be assigned to a date not earlier than 190.

The *Bacchides* is dated not much later than 189 by its apparent reference to the four triumphs of that year, and in passing we cannot but regret its excessive share of puns, although an infallible sign of Plautus' originality at work. To this period probably belong the *Truculentus*, which is singularly immune from Grecisms, and contains, in patches, a considerable Roman element, especially in the character of *Stratophanes* and in the allusions to Italian geography: and the *Casina*, very strongly Romanised in the scenes containing the casting of the lots and the celebration of the marriage, and obviously written before the prohibition of the Bacchanalia in 186.

There remain two plays of Plautus, the *Captivi* and the *Amphitruo*, to which it is impossible to assign a definite date. It is, however, only reasonable to suppose that they were among his latest works. The *Captivi* is, from a dramatic standpoint, extraordinarily good; Lessing, no mean critic, went so far as to call it the best play that had ever been put upon the stage. It would indeed be no unworthy fruit of the many years of labour which Plautus had devoted to the writing and producing of plays. Its original is unknown. It is unlike most other Plautine comedies in its serious tone, and it has been suggested that the most amusing scenes, which are those in which the parasite *Ergasilus* appears, were Plautus' own invention. This is plausible, and, if true, may be accounted doubly to the credit of the author, for the play runs very smoothly, and the supposed original passages, apart from their individual merits, are inserted with the utmost skill. In almost every detail we have seen the play to be compatible with genuinely Roman ideas, and

it abounds in vividly Roman touches, such as the many allusions to Roman and Italian localities.

The *Amphitruo* is a different type of play, but no less vigorous and striking. We have already estimated its originality and its conformity in details to contemporary habits and thoughts at Rome. In the scenes with *Alcmena* it contains some singular little touches of tenderness and pathos; and yet its general effect is that of a roaring farce. It was no common mind that could unite such diverse features in a single work without producing the effect of absurdity or disjointedness.

We have now briefly reviewed the twenty extant plays of Plautus. Considered as a whole, they vary greatly in merit, just as the best among them vary in the manner of their charm.

The importance of Plautus, as elicited by this enquiry, is twofold. In the first place, he is an instance of literary development, at a time when the possibility of such a development had only just been reached, and had not yet been comprehended or analysed in Roman thought. His progress is the more interesting, as he owed it chiefly to himself, and was almost independent of previous tradition or contemporary study. It is difficult to pick out a play or a passage, and say, "Here he was an artist," because in so many cases there were earlier Greek artists behind him; but we can say that the man who could produce, on the one hand, the *Mercator*, and on the other the *Pseudolus*, the *Captivi*, and the *Amphitruo*, was endowed at the beginning with a wonderful adaptability and capacity for progress, united to a great dramatic sense and power of creation. The nature of his work afforded practically no scope for excellence in original

dramatic construction—that was already done for him; but in the portrayal of the men around him, and in the power of imparting fresh, wide-open life and fun and mirth, he surely developed a gift which is the possession of a few who are as precious as they are infinitely wise.

Lastly, with a little discrimination we can learn from Plautus a great deal of the way in which the Romans of his day thought and spoke and acted. This is important, because, beyond the twenty extant plays of Plautus, the fragments of Ennius, and some scanty writings of Cato, that age has bequeathed to us no literary expression of itself; and the fragments of Cato, for all their independence and staunch ideals, lack the extraordinary vitality, the sympathies, and the quick unerring humour, which make the plays of Plautus so much more personal and valuable a record. His value, perhaps temporary, as the main source of our knowledge of the New Comedy, has been frequently laboured, and has rather led to the obscuring of his individual merit. In some respects he and we are poles asunder; yet, when we have considered him in the light of his own standards and conditions, he remains a vivid figure, memorable, and perhaps greater than we can understand.

